

Childhood Immunisation

Immunisation strengthens the body's immune system – its natural defence system – helping it to resist particular infections. Immunisation is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting children (and adults) against disease.

Vaccines are injections or oral doses of live but weakened virus, dead bacteria or virus, parts of bacteria or weakened bacterial toxins.

Immunisation with a vaccine (vaccination) strengthens the body's immune system against a particular bacteria or virus, before contact with that microorganism. It gives people increased protection against serious and life-threatening infection.

Some infections that immunisation can prevent

Chicken pox (varicella) – a viral infection that causes an itchy, blistering skin rash and can lead to severe complications. It may reappear later in life as shingles.

Diphtheria – a bacterial infection that causes a membrane to grow in the throat, leading to breathing difficulties. It can also cause heart and nerve damage, and can lead to death.

***Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib)** – a bacterial infection that can affect the brain, throat, lungs, joints or skin and can lead to death. It occurs mostly in children under 2 years.

Hepatitis B – a viral infection that affects the liver and can lead to liver failure or cancer.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) – a sexually transmitted viral infection that can lead to cervical cancer and genital warts.

Measles – a viral infection that causes fever, rash, runny nose, cough and conjunctivitis. It can lead to ear, lung and brain infections and death.

Meningococcal disease type C – a bacterial infection that can affect the blood or brain and can lead to death. It can develop very rapidly.

Mumps – a viral infection that causes swollen salivary glands and can lead to severe complications.

Pertussis (whooping cough) – a bacterial infection that can cause a severe cough, lung infection, brain damage and death.

Pneumococcal disease – a bacterial infection that can affect the brain, blood or lungs and can lead to death.

Poliomyelitis – a viral infection that can cause brain infection and paralysis and can lead to death.

Rotavirus – a viral infection that can cause severe diarrhoea and vomiting in babies and young children and can lead to death.

Rubella (German measles) – a viral infection that causes swollen glands, joint pain and a rash. Women who get rubella during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy are at risk of having a baby with significant abnormalities.

Tetanus (lockjaw) – a severe bacterial infection that affects the nervous system. It causes severe muscle spasms and breathing difficulty and can lead to death.

Who needs immunisation?

Australian health authorities recommend immunisation for all children. The advantages of immunisation far outweigh the risks of serious side effects. In Australia, childhood vaccinations are available to most children free-of-charge through the National Immunisation Program from doctors, immunisation clinics, some hospitals and Aboriginal health clinics. To reduce the number of injections needed, a range of products containing combinations of vaccines are available – ask a doctor or immunisation clinic.

Adverse effects of immunisation

Common side effects of immunisation are swelling, redness and pain at the injection site, and mild fever. Most side effects only last a short time and the child recovers without any problems. Ask a doctor, pharmacist or immunisation clinic about side effects of immunisation.

Paracetamol can reduce fever and relieve discomfort, helping a child to settle after immunisation.

Keep a record

Each time a child is immunised, the details should be recorded in the *Personal Health Record* given to parents by the hospital or birth centre when a baby is born. Some states and territories ask for a record of a child's

immunisation before the child can start day care or school

The Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR - Medicare Australia) also records details of immunisations given to children under 7 years of age who live in Australia. ACIR receives the information

from the immunisation provider. To obtain your child's vaccination history from ACIR phone 1800 653 809 or visit the Medicare website.

Note: A financial payment is available from the Family Assistance Office (Centrelink) for families with children who are fully immunised.

National Immunisation Program Schedule for children (from 1 July 2007)

AGE	VACCINE
Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis B
2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis Hepatitis B [footnote b] Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) [footnotes c and d] Pneumococcal Poliomyelitis Rotavirus
4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis Hepatitis B [footnote b] Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) [footnotes c and d] Pneumococcal Poliomyelitis Rotavirus
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis Hepatitis B [footnote b] Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) [footnote c] Pneumococcal [footnote e] Poliomyelitis Rotavirus [footnote j]
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis B [footnote b] Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) [footnote d] Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) Meningococcal C
12–24 months (some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis A
18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chickenpox (Varicella)
18–24 months (some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pneumococcal Hepatitis A
4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) Poliomyelitis
10–13 years (if not already immune)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis B Chickenpox (Varicella)
12–13 year old girls (school based program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
15–17 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis.

FOOTNOTES

- b.** 3 doses of hepB needed following birth dose, at either 2, 4, 6 months or at 2, 4 and 12 months.
- c.** 4 doses of PRP-T Hib needed at 2, 4, 6 and 12 months.
- d.** 3 doses of PRP-OMP Hib needed at 2, 4 and 12 months. (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in some areas)
- e.** Some children need further doses of pneumococcal vaccine at 12 months and 4 years
- j.** Need for third dose of rotavirus vaccine depends on vaccine brand used

For more information

Immunise Australia

Phone: 1800 671 811

Website: www.immunise.health.gov.au

Your local **Baby, Child or Infant Health Centre or Service** – listed in the white pages of the phone book.

Australian Childhood Immunisation Register

Phone: 1800 653 809

Website: www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

*Pharmacists are medicines experts.
Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.*

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