



Pharmaceutical
Society of Australia



Childhood Immunisation

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

Vaccines are injections or oral dosage forms containing inactivated microorganisms or parts of microorganisms.

Immunisation with vaccines (vaccination) strengthens the body's immune system against specific microorganisms, before contact with those microorganisms. It gives people increased protection against serious and life-threatening infections.

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 reoccur 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 lead to death.

Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) – a bacterial infection that can affect the brain, throat, lungs, joints or skin and 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 severe and often fatal bacterial infection of the blood and/or brain that 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 potentially fatal bacterial infection of the brain, blood or lungs.

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

Rotavirus – a viral infection that causes severe diarrhoea and vomiting in infants 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 and often fatal bacterial infection that affects the nervous system, causing severe muscle spasms.

Who needs immunisation?

Australian health authorities recommend immunisation for all children. The advantages of immunisation far outweigh the risks of serious adverse 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.

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 <i>[footnote b]</i> <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) <i>[footnotes c & d]</i> Pneumococcal Polio Rotavirus
4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis Hepatitis B <i>[footnote b]</i> <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) <i>[footnotes c & d]</i> Pneumococcal Polio Rotavirus
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis Hepatitis B <i>[footnote b]</i> <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) <i>[footnote c]</i> Pneumococcal <i>(footnote e)</i> Polio Rotavirus <i>[footnote j]</i>
12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis B <i>[footnote b]</i> <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) <i>[footnote d]</i> 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
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) Polio
10-13 years (some children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hepatitis B Chickenpox
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, 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
- 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

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

Adverse effects of immunisation

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

Note: A financial payment is available from the Family Assistance Office for families with children aged 18-24 months who are fully immunised.

For more information

Immunise Australia – phone 1800 671 811 or 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.

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflets – your pharmacist can advise on availability.

NPS Medicines Line – phone 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm EST.

The Poisons Information Centre – in case of poisoning phone 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

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

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ALWAYS READ THE LABEL. For temporary relief of pain and fever. Use only as directed. Incorrect use could be harmful. Consult your healthcare professional if symptoms persist.