

# Protect their future



# Don't wait to vaccinate

For more information speak to your GP, nurse or health visitor

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Every parent wants their children to grow up healthy and happy. Vaccinating against common childhood illnesses is a quick and effective way to protect your child against a range of serious and potentially fatal diseases.<sup>1</sup>

This leaflet provides important information you need to know about vaccination, and can also be used as a guide to talk to your GP, health visitor or nurse about your child's vaccinations.

### Why are vaccinations so important for children?

From the day your child is born they will come into contact with thousands of germs (bacteria and viruses).<sup>1</sup> The majority of these germs will not cause them any harm, but some cause infections, such as meningitis, that can make your child seriously ill and even lead to disability or death.<sup>2,3</sup>



**Did you know?**  
After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention in the world for saving lives and promoting good health.<sup>6</sup>



**Did you know?**  
Vaccines prevent more than 2.5 million deaths worldwide each year.<sup>5</sup>

Vaccinations can help your child to fight off these bacteria and viruses, protecting them against many serious illnesses – and the complications that can arise from them.<sup>1</sup>

Simply put, vaccines save lives. This is why vaccines are offered to children in the UK for free by the National Health Service (NHS).<sup>4</sup>

# How do vaccines work?



Most vaccines are given in the form of an injection which contains tiny amounts of a bacteria or viruses.<sup>7</sup> Others may be given as a liquid or a spray.<sup>8</sup>



The bacteria and viruses in a vaccine are killed or weakened and will not overload your child's immune system.<sup>7</sup>



Instead, the vaccine will strengthen your child's immune system, protecting them from getting ill when they come into contact with the bacteria or viruses.<sup>7</sup>



Some vaccines will require more than one dose to give the full protection.<sup>4</sup> Your GP, nurse or health visitor will be able to advise you on which vaccinations these are and when 'booster' doses are needed.



It only takes a short time for a nurse or GP to vaccinate your child. In many cases the protection provided can last a lifetime, but this depends on the vaccine and the person.<sup>7</sup> Your GP, nurse or health visitor can provide more information.

# What vaccinations your child needs and when<sup>4,8</sup>



Different vaccines are recommended for your child at different ages. The table below shows what your child needs and when.

When	Vaccine
2 months old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Haemophilus Influenzae Type B (Hib)</li> <li>• Pneumococcal</li> <li>• Rotavirus</li> </ul>
3 months old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Hib (second dose)</li> <li>• Meningococcal group C (Men C)</li> <li>• Rotavirus (second dose)</li> </ul>
4 months old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Hib (third dose)</li> <li>• Pneumococcal (second dose)</li> </ul>
Between 12 and 13 months old – within a month of the first birthday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hib/Men C (booster)</li> <li>• Pneumococcal (third dose)</li> <li>• Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)</li> </ul>
2 and 3 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nasal flu vaccine (annual)</li> </ul>
3 years and 4 months, or soon after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio (pre-school booster)</li> <li>• MMR (second dose)</li> </ul>
Girls aged 12 to 13 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human papillomavirus (HPV) (3 vaccines in 6 months)</li> </ul>
Around 14 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tetanus, diphtheria and polio (booster)</li> <li>• Men C (booster)</li> </ul>



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# Myths and facts



There is a lot of information available about vaccinations. Below are some common myths and facts.

## Myths

## Facts

As most children are vaccinated, I do not need to vaccinate my child

Vaccination does not just protect your child – it can help protect your whole community.<sup>9</sup> When a large number of the population is vaccinated this provides indirect protection to people who can't be vaccinated because they're too ill or are having treatment that damages their immune system, such as treatment for cancer.<sup>7,9</sup> However, to lower the chance of unvaccinated people contracting serious and highly infectious illnesses, and help prevent outbreaks of disease, it's estimated that at least 9 in 10 children need to have the recommended vaccines.<sup>10</sup>

Some diseases are being wiped out so I do not need to vaccinate my child

As more and more of the population is vaccinated, diseases can sometimes disappear completely and the vaccination programme can be stopped. However, so far this has only happened with smallpox.<sup>1</sup> The only time it's safe to stop vaccinating children against an illness is when the disease has been wiped out worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

Protection from a vaccine will "wear off" or "run out"

Many vaccinations can provide long-term protection against infection, depending on the vaccination and the person being vaccinated.<sup>7</sup> However some vaccines also require a booster – your GP, nurse or health visitor will be able to help you understand which vaccines may need a boost and when.<sup>4</sup>

Vaccination can make my child seriously ill

Although no vaccine is completely risk-free, the chances of major side effects from a vaccine are tiny compared with the potential impact to your child's health if they contracted the disease itself.<sup>11</sup>



## Want to know more?

If you're not sure whether your child has had all their vaccinations, or want to know more, speak to your GP, nurse or health visitor.

For more information  
on vaccinations visit

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations)

Many of the recommended vaccinations in the childhood immunisation programme protect against some form of meningitis.<sup>12</sup> These charities provide useful information and support:



[www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org)



[www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org)

## References

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