

## Immunisation - childhood

Immunisation from an early age is highly recommended for all Australian children. Having your child immunised helps to protect them from the most serious childhood infections, some of which may threaten their lives.

Routine childhood immunisations help to protect your child against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough (pertussis), polio, pneumococcal disease, meningococcal C disease, hepatitis B, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), rotavirus, chickenpox (varicella), measles, mumps and rubella (German measles).

The National Immunisation Program provides the routine childhood immunisations recommended for all children in Australia, free of charge. Some groups are more at risk than others in the community and may need additional vaccinations.

See your doctor or local health clinic to have your child immunised. All Victorian local councils run immunisation sessions.

### Immunisation and young children

In the first months of life, a baby might have some protection from a specific infectious disease but only if the mother has had that infectious disease or has been immunised. This is known as passive immunity and occurs when antibodies are transferred from mother to baby during pregnancy. The level of antibody protection for the baby can be low and wears off quickly and this puts them at risk of diseases that can be prevented with vaccination.

Most childhood immunisations are given as an injection in the arm or leg, except rotavirus vaccine, which is administered by mouth. A vaccination dose may contain a vaccine against one specific disease or provide immunity for several diseases, if a number of vaccines are combined in the same injection. This helps to reduce the number of injections your child needs.

### Immunisation schedule for Victorian babies and young children

The Immunisation schedule Victoria outlines the vaccines that are routinely provided free of charge to all Victorian children under the National Immunisation Program. It also outlines the age at which each vaccination should be given. New vaccines against serious infections continue to be developed and the schedule might be updated in the future.

Age	Disease	Vaccine brand	Common reactions
<b>Birth</b>	Hepatitis B	H-B-Vax® II Paediatric	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
<b>Two months (from six weeks)</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Infanrix® hexa	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying
	Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13®	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
	Rotavirus	RotaTeq®	Mild temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea up to seven days after immunisation
<b>Four months</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Infanrix® hexa	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying

	Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13®	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
	Rotavirus	RotaTeq®	Mild temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea up to seven days after immunisation
<b>Six months</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Infanrix® hexa	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying
	Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13®	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
	Rotavirus	RotaTeq®	Mild temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea up to seven days after immunisation
<b>12 months</b>	Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)	M-M-R® II/Priorix®	About seven to 10 days after vaccination: fever (can be over 39°C), faint red non-infectious rash, drowsiness, runny nose, cough or puffy eyes, swollen salivary glands
	<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib), Meningococcal C	Menitorix®	Mild temperature, loss of appetite, irritability/crying
<b>18 months</b>	Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) (MMRV)	Priorix-Tetra®	About seven to 10 days after vaccination: fever (can be over 39 °C), faint red non-infectious rash, drowsiness, runny nose, cough or puffy eyes, swollen salivary glands About five to 26 days after vaccination: mild rash like chickenpox
<b>Four years</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio	Infanrix® IPV	Mild temperature, irritability/crying, drowsiness
	Measles, mumps, rubella (only given if MMRV was not given at 18 months)	M-M-R® II/Priorix®	About seven to 10 days after vaccination: fever (can be over 39 °C), faint red non-infectious rash, drowsiness, runny nose, cough or puffy eyes, swollen salivary glands

## Immunising your child is important

All parents must provide a school entry immunisation status certificate when they enrol their child in primary school. This is a document that shows your child's immunisation status. Your child's immunisation history status is automatically provided to you from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register when your child turns 18 months of age and five years of age. Your doctor or local council can also provide you with a school entry immunisation status certificate.

You can also request an immunisation history statement at any time using the Medicare Online Services or by contacting the Australian Department of Human Services (DHS) or the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

To encourage parents to immunise their children at the appropriate age, the Australian Government provides a number of government family assistance payments, which require children to meet the vaccination requirements. For more information, visit the Department of Human Services, Australian Government – Immunisation page or visit a Centrelink or Medicare Service Centre.

## Preparing for your child's immunisation

When you take your child for each vaccination, it is important to take your child's *My Health and Development Record* (the green book) or your child's health record booklet, so that the doctor, nurse or health worker can record your child's visit. These records are an important reminder of when your child's next immunisations are due and which children in the family are immunised.

There is also the option of setting up an eHealth record for your child and downloading the *My Child's eHealth Record* app from the [eHealth.gov.au](http://eHealth.gov.au) website.

## Pre-immunisation checklist

Before the immunisation, you need to tell the doctor or nurse if your child:

- is unwell (temperature over 38.5 °C)
- has had a severe reaction following any vaccine
- has any severe allergies to any other medication or substances
- has had any vaccine in the past month
- has had an injection of immunoglobulin or received any blood products or a whole blood transfusion within the past year
- was a pre-term infant born less than 32 weeks gestation, or weighing less than 2,000 g at birth
- as a baby, has had an intussusception (a blockage caused by one portion of the bowel sliding into the next piece of bowel like the pieces of a telescope)
- has a chronic illness
- has a bleeding disorder
- does not have a functioning spleen
- lives with someone with a disease or who is having treatment that causes lower immunity – examples include leukaemia, cancer or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), oral steroid medications, radiotherapy or chemotherapy
- has a disease which lowers immunity (such as leukaemia, cancer or HIV/AIDS) or is having treatment that causes low immunity (such as oral steroid medication, radiotherapy or chemotherapy)
- identifies as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

## Side effects after immunisation

Immunisations are effective and safe, although all medication can have unwanted side effects. Some children may experience a reaction to a vaccine. In virtually all cases, immunisation side effects are not as serious as the symptoms a child would experience if they were to contract the disease.

The mild side effects can include a mild fever and pain at the injection site. For specific information about side effects from different doses of vaccine, ask your doctor or healthcare professional.

## Managing fever after immunisation

Common side effects following immunisation are usually mild and temporary (occurring one to two days after vaccination). Specific treatment is not usually required.

There are a number of treatment options that can reduce the side effects of the vaccine including:

- giving extra fluids to drink and not overdressing if there is a fever
- although routine use of paracetamol after vaccination is not recommended, if fever is present, paracetamol can be given – check the label for the correct dose or speak with your pharmacist (especially when giving paracetamol to children).

## Managing injection site discomfort

Many vaccine injections may result in soreness, redness, itching, swelling or burning at the injection site for one to two days. Paracetamol might be required to ease the discomfort.

## Concerns about side effects of immunisation

If the side effect following immunisation is unexpected, persistent or severe or if you are worried about yourself or your child's condition after a vaccination, see your doctor or immunisation nurse as soon as possible or go directly to a hospital. Immunisation side effects may be reported to SAEFVIC, the Victorian vaccine safety and central reporting service.

You can discuss with your immunisation provider how to report adverse events in other states or territories. It is also important to seek medical advice if you (or your child) are unwell, as this may be due to other illness rather than because of the vaccination.

## Rare side effects of immunisation

There is a very small risk of a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any vaccine. This is why you are advised to stay at the clinic or medical surgery for at least 15 minutes following immunisation in case further treatment is required.

## If your child misses an immunisation

To fully protect your child and avoid unnecessary costs, it is best to immunise your child at the recommended age. If you have fallen behind or missed a session, the vaccine schedule can be safely continued as if there had been no delay. Ask your doctor or immunisation provider about catch-up doses of vaccine.

There is no need to repeat doses already received before having catch-up doses. However, a significant delay could mean that your child will not be eligible for a free vaccine, as these are generally given for specified age groups.

## Immunisation and HALO

The immunisations you may need are decided by your health, age, lifestyle and occupation. Together, these factors are referred to as HALO.

Talk to your doctor or immunisation provider if you think you or someone in your care has health, age, lifestyle or occupation factors that could mean immunisation is necessary. You can check your immunisation HALO using the Immunisation for Life infographic (pdf) downloadable poster.

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- Local government immunisation service
- Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 132 229
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Immunisation Program, Department of Health, Victorian Government Tel. 1300 882 008
- National Immunisation Information Line Tel. 1800 671 811
- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register Tel 1800 653 809
- Pharmacist
- SAEFVIC Tel. 1300 882 924 – the line is attended between 10 am and 3.30 pm and you can leave a message at all other times

## Things to remember

- Immunisation from an early age is highly recommended for all Australian children to protect them against serious childhood infections.
- The Immunisation Schedule Victoria outlines the vaccines your child needs and the age at which each should be given.
- Some groups are more at risk than others in the community and may need additional vaccines.
- Remain in the clinic with your child for at least 15 minutes after their immunisation to be sure there are no immediate side effects.
- Serious side effects or allergic reactions to the vaccines are rare.

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