

**Immunisation
is important**

for children



Queensland Government
Queensland Health

i M M U N I S E
AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

What is immunisation?

Immunisation is a simple and effective way of protecting children against certain diseases. It not only protects individuals, but also others in our community by increasing the level of immunity and minimising the spread of disease.

Is immunisation safe?

Yes, immunisation is very safe. All vaccines used in Australia must be approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) which assesses safety. If you have any concerns, talk to your doctor or immunisation provider.

How do immunisations work?

Vaccines trigger the immune system to make antibodies to fight against certain diseases. They use the body's natural response to disease so if a vaccinated person comes in contact with the disease, their immune system will respond by stopping it to develop or greatly reducing its severity.

When are immunisations given?

The National Immunisation Program Schedule recommends certain immunisations for children. These vaccines are available free for the individuals recommended. To have the best protection against a disease, several vaccinations may be needed and it is important to be immunised at the recommended times.

» A special note about Rotavirus

Rotavirus is a common cause of severe gastroenteritis in infants and young children.

Rotavirus vaccine is given at 2, 4 and 6 months of age. The first dose must be given at 2 months otherwise your child may be too old and miss out.

Where can I get my child immunised?

Your doctor can provide your child's immunisations. There may be a consultation fee. Some local council clinics and child health centres provide free immunisation services.

What if my child has never been vaccinated? (or I am not sure what vaccines have been given)

Talk to your immunisation provider or child health nurse who can advise you on which vaccinations are recommended. If your child has received some immunisations but you're not quite sure what, you can contact the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register on 1800 653 809 for a copy of your child's immunisation history.

Immunisation history statements for children under 7 years of age are available online at www.medicareaustralia.gov.au or at your local Medicare office. Your doctor can also contact the Register with your consent to check your child's immunisation history.

What information is required for vaccination?

Please tell your immunisation provider if your child:

- is unwell today
- has a disease which lowers immunity (eg. leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS) or is having treatment which lowers immunity (eg. oral steroid medicines such as cortisone and prednisone, radiotherapy, chemotherapy)
- has had a severe reaction following any vaccine
- has *any* severe allergies (to anything)
- 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
- is pregnant
- has a past history of Guillain-Barré syndrome
- was a preterm infant
- has a chronic illness
- has a bleeding disorder.

A different vaccine schedule may be recommended if the person to be vaccinated:

- identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- does not have a functioning spleen
- is planning a pregnancy or anticipating parenthood
- is a parent, grandparent or carer of a newborn
- lives with someone who has a disease which lowers immunity (eg. leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS), or lives with someone who is having treatment which lowers immunity (eg. oral steroid medicines such as cortisone and prednisone, radiotherapy, chemotherapy)¹.

¹ National Health and Medical Research Council, 2008.

The Australian Immunisation Handbook (9th Ed.)

Do vaccines have side effects?

Like all medications, vaccines may have side effects. Most side effects are minor, last a short time and do not lead to any long-term problems. Children rarely experience a serious side effect following immunisation. Modern vaccines provide high levels of protection against many infectious diseases.

Are there reasons for not being vaccinated?

Your child should not be vaccinated if suffering an acute illness with a fever over 38.5°C on the day of vaccination. None of the following should stop your child from being vaccinated:

- family history of an adverse event following vaccination
- family history of convulsions
- previous pertussis-like illness, measles, rubella, mumps or meningococcal infection
- prematurity (vaccination should not be postponed)
- neurological conditions including cerebral palsy and Down's syndrome
- contact with an infectious disease
- asthma, eczema, atopy, hay fever or 'snuffles'
- treatment with antibiotics
- treatment with locally acting (inhaled or low dose topical) steroids
- child's mother is pregnant
- the child to be vaccinated is breastfed
- history of neonatal jaundice
- low weight in an otherwise healthy child
- recent or imminent surgery.

True medical reasons not to vaccinate children are extremely rare. A severe allergic reaction to any of a particular vaccine's components and/or following a previous dose of that vaccine is the only true contraindication to vaccination.

What should I do if a serious side effect following vaccination occurs?

Seek medical attention immediately. The reaction will be treated, recorded and reported.

It is important that all serious side effects following immunisation are reported. This ensures that:

- appropriate advice on further vaccination is received
- additional information about the risks and benefits of further vaccination is given
- the safety of vaccines is well monitored.

In the majority of children, vaccination can safely continue after a serious side effect following immunisation. In some cases this may need to be under medical supervision. Please tell your doctor or immunisation provider if your child has had a serious reaction following immunisation before any further vaccinations are received.

Where are vaccinations recorded?

Your immunisation provider should record all vaccines given in your child's Personal Health Record book. This will also remind you when the next vaccinations are due. Keep your Personal Health Record in a safe place, eg. with other important documents.

Is there an immunisation register?

Yes, your child's vaccination information is sent to Queensland Health's Vaccine Information and Vaccine Administration System (VIVAS) and the national Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR).

The VIVAS information allows Queensland Health to alert your doctor if your child is overdue for a vaccination.

ACIR information assists with allocating government benefits such as Child Care Benefit and Maternity Immunisation Allowance.

For more information

If you have further questions or would like more information or advice on immunisation, contact your doctor, immunisation provider or nearest Population Health Unit listed below.

Brisbane Northside	3624 1111
Brisbane Southside	3000 9148
Cairns	4050 3600
Darling Downs	4631 9888
Gold Coast	5509 7222
Hervey Bay	4120 6000
Mackay	4968 6611
Mount Isa	4744 4846
Rockhampton	4920 6989
Sunshine Coast	5409 6600
Townsville	4753 9000

See www.health.qld.gov.au
or www.immunise.health.gov.au
for further information.

National Immunisation Program Schedule Queensland

(from 1 March 2008)

Age	The diseases being immunised against
Birth	Hepatitis B (hepB)
2 months	Hepatitis B (hepB) Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) Poliomyelitis Pneumococcal disease Rotavirus
4 months	Hepatitis B (hepB) Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) Poliomyelitis Pneumococcal disease Rotavirus
6 months	Hepatitis B (hepB) ¹ Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) ² Poliomyelitis Pneumococcal disease Rotavirus
12 months	Hepatitis B (hepB) ¹ <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) Measles, mumps and rubella Meningococcal C disease

Age	The diseases being immunised against
18 months	Varicella (chickenpox) Hepatitis A (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)
24 months	Hepatitis A (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children) Pneumococcal disease (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children)
4 years	Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) Poliomyelitis Measles, mumps and rubella
Year 8	Hepatitis B (hepB), 2 doses (only required if not previously received an appropriate course) Varicella (chickenpox) (only required if child has not had the disease or previously been vaccinated)
Year 8 (girls only)	Human Papillomavirus (HPV), 3 doses
Year 10	Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough)

¹ Total of three doses of hepatitis B vaccine required following the birth dose, at either 2, 4 and 6 months OR at 2, 4 and 12 months, depending on vaccine used.

² Whether your child needs a Hib vaccination at 6 months depends on previous Hib vaccinations they have received and vaccine used in the schedule. Your immunisation provider can advise.

Some diseases are covered in combined vaccines. That is, one injection protects against several diseases.

Additional vaccines

Children with some underlying medical conditions require additional pneumococcal vaccination at 12 months and 4 years. Ask your doctor for advice.

Are childhood diseases serious?

Yes, the following are examples of the symptoms and effects of some childhood diseases.

Disease	Symptoms and Effects
Diphtheria	Difficulty breathing. Damaged heart and nervous system. Approximately 10% of children with diphtheria die.
Hepatitis A	Highly contagious. While most recover fully, can lead to death from fulminant hepatitis.
Hepatitis B	Causes liver disease. Can result in liver disease or liver cancer in later life.
Hib (Haemophilus Influenzae type B)	Causes meningitis (inflammation of the tissues surrounding the brain) and epiglottitis, usually in young children. Can be fatal.
Measles	Highly contagious. Can cause pneumonia and encephalitis (brain inflammation). May be fatal.
Meningococcal C disease	Causes septicaemia (infection of bloodstream) and meningitis. Can be fatal, result in loss of limbs or brain damage.
Mumps	Swollen salivary glands over the jaw. Can cause inflammation of the brain.
Pertussis (whooping cough)	Coughing spasms affecting breathing. Serious and sometimes fatal in young children.
Pneumococcal disease	Causes pneumonia, septicaemia and meningitis. Can be fatal.
Poliomyelitis (Polio)	Affects nervous system. Can permanently paralyse leg muscles and muscles used for breathing. Sometimes fatal.
Rotavirus	Common cause of severe gastroenteritis in infants and young children, causing over half of all hospitalised cases of gastroenteritis in children less than 5 years of age.
Rubella (German Measles)	Usually mild illness. Can cause heart and brain damage, deafness and other serious disabilities in unborn babies if a mother is infected with rubella when pregnant.
Tetanus	Painful illness. Causes spasms of the jaw and other muscles. Often fatal.
Varicella (chickenpox)	Highly contagious. Usually mild illness but can cause encephalitis and pneumonia. Can cause congenital abnormalities in unborn babies if the mother is infected with varicella. Can reactivate and cause shingles later in life.