

## Childhood immunisation

### Summary

- Immunisation from an early age helps protect your child against serious childhood infections.
- The Immunisation Schedule Victoria outlines the vaccines your child needs and the age at which each vaccine 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.

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) and influenza.

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. The Victorian government funds some extra vaccines from time to time.

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 **Victorian immunisation schedule** outlines the vaccines that are routinely provided free of charge to all Victorian children under the **National Immunisation Program** and the Victorian funded 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
Birth	Hepatitis B	H-B-VaxII Paediatric or Enerix Paediatric	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
Two months (from six weeks)	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Infanrix <i>hexa</i>	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying
	Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site

	Rotavirus	Rotarix	Mild temperature
<b>Four months</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Infanrix <i>hexa</i>	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying
	Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
	Rotavirus	Rotarix	Mild temperature
<b>Six months</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Infanrix <i>hexa</i>	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying
<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.  Very rarely a low platelet count causing bleeding and bruising
	<i>Meningococcal ACWY</i>	Nimenrix	Mild temperature, loss of appetite, irritability/crying pain at the injection site
	Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13	Mild temperature, pain at the injection site
<b>18 months</b>	Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) (MMRV)	Priorix-Tetra or ProQuad	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
	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis	Infanrix or Tripacel	Mild temperature, irritability/crying, drowsiness
	<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	ActHib	Mild temperature, irritability/crying, pain at the injection site
<b>Four years</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio	Infanrix IPV	Mild temperature, irritability/crying, drowsiness
<b>Six months of age to less than five years of age (from May 2018)</b>	Influenza	Influenza vaccine	Fever, feeling unwell, muscle aches, injection site pain, redness and swelling

### Immunising your child is important

By law, there are particular immunisation requirements that your child needs to meet in order to go to childcare, kindergarten and primary school.

By law, immunisations must be up-to-date before your child starts childcare and kindergarten. The Australian Immunisation Register (Tel. **1800 653 809**) will send you an Immunisation History Statement of your child's immunisation status on request or you can download the Immunisation History Statement from your myGov account.

In Victoria, parents of children attending a childcare or kindergarten service are required to provide an updated Immunisation History Statement to the service when/if the attending child has a new vaccine/s, so that the service always has the most current information about the child's immunisation status.

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 [Australian Government Department of Human Services](#) website 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](#).

### **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, HIV or 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 pain or 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 reactions

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

### Concerns about side effects of immunisation

If a 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 service (Tel. 1300 882 924 and select option 1).

You can discuss with your immunisation provider how to report adverse events in other states or territories.

It is 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.

### 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**.

### Where to get help

- Your GP (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. **13 22 29**
- **NURSE-ON-CALL** Tel. **1300 60 60 24** -- for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Immunisation Section, Department of Health & Human Services**, Victorian Government Tel. **1300 882 008**
- Immunise Australia Information Line Tel. **1800 671 811** (8:30 am to 5.00 pm, 7 days)
- **Australian Immunisation Register** Tel **1800 653 809**
- Pharmacist
- **SAEFVIC** Tel. **1300 882 924** -- the line is attended between 9.00 am and 4.00 pm and you can leave a message at all other times

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

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