Immunisation from an early age helps to 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 extra vaccines. Stay 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.

Routine childhood immunisations help to protect your child against:

- diphtheria
- tetanus
- whooping cough (pertussis)
- polio
- pneumococcal disease
- meningococcal ACWY disease
- hepatitis B
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- rotavirus
- chickenpox (varicella)
- measles
- mumps
- rubella (German measles)
- influenza.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants are also protected against meningococcal B disease.

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 extra 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 infectious diseases that their mother has had or been immunised against. This is known as passive immunity. It 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. 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 given by mouth. A vaccination dose may contain a vaccine against one specific disease, or several diseases. This is
known as a combination injection, and it 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Vaccine brand ®</th>
<th>Common reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>H-B-Vax Paediatric or Enerix Paediatric</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two months (from six weeks)</td>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <em>Haemophilus influenzae</em> type b (Hib)</td>
<td>Infanrix hexa</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
<td>Prevenar 13</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rotavirus</td>
<td>Rotarix</td>
<td>Mild temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meningococcal B ( Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants only)</td>
<td>Bexsero</td>
<td>Fever needing paracetamol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four months</td>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <em>Haemophilus influenzae</em> type b (Hib)</td>
<td>Infanrix hexa</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
<td>Prevenar 13</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rotavirus</td>
<td>Rotarix</td>
<td>Mild temperature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meningococcal B ( Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants only)</td>
<td>Bexsero</td>
<td>Fever needing paracetamol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six months</td>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, polio, <em>Haemophilus influenzae</em> type b (Hib)</td>
<td>Infanrix hexa</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site, drowsiness, irritability/crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)</td>
<td>M-M-R II/Priorix</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meningococcal ACWY</td>
<td>Nimenrix</td>
<td>Mild temperature, loss of appetite, irritability/crying pain at the injection site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
<td>Prevenar 13</td>
<td>Mild temperature, pain at the injection site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meningococcal B ( Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants only)</td>
<td>Bexsero</td>
<td>Fever needing paracetamol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Vaccines</td>
<td>Vaccine Provider</td>
<td>Side Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) (MMRV)</td>
<td>Priorix-Tetra or ProQuad</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis</td>
<td>Infanrix or Tripacel</td>
<td>Mild temperature, irritability/crying, drowsiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)</td>
<td>ActHib</td>
<td>Mild temperature, irritability/crying, pain at the injection site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four years</td>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio</td>
<td>Infanrix IPV</td>
<td>Mild temperature, irritability/crying, drowsiness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six months of age to less than five years of age (from May 2018)</td>
<td>Annual influenza</td>
<td>Influenza vaccine</td>
<td>Fever, feeling unwell, muscle aches, injection site pain, redness and swelling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional vaccines are given to children with certain medical risk conditions that put them at increased risk of complications from vaccine preventable diseases, such as:

- babies that are born prematurely or low birth weight
- children with chronic medical risk conditions. Talk with your doctor to see if your child should get extra vaccines.

**Immunising your child is important**

There are immunisation requirements that your child needs to meet in order to go to childcare, kindergarten and primary school in Victoria. By law, your child’s immunisations must be up to date before they start childcare and kindergarten.

The Australian Immunisation Register (tel. 1800 653 809) will send you your child’s Immunisation History Statement (a record of their immunisation status) on request or you can download it 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 if the child has a new vaccine(s). This ensures that the service always has current information about the child’s immunisation status.

Parents who immunise their children at the appropriate age may be eligible for Australian Government family assistance payments. For more information, visit the Australian Government Services Australia website or visit a Centrelink or Medicare Service Centre.

**Preparing for your child’s immunisation**

When you take your child for each vaccination, it 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:

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• 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 2000 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
• is an infant of a mother who was receiving highly immunsuppressive therapy – for example, biological disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (bDMARDs) – during pregnancy
• 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.

The meningococcal B vaccine, Bexsero, commonly causes a fever in children aged less than two years. Paracetamol must be given in the 30 minutes before vaccination or as soon as practicable after vaccination for children less than two years. This should be followed by two more doses given six hours apart regardless of whether the child has a fever.

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, or baby is crying and unsettled 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.

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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

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