

# Vaccines for Your Child

## What are vaccines and why should my child get them?

Vaccines are medicines that prevent certain diseases. These diseases can cause serious health problems or even death. Some of the diseases are hard to cure and can be easily spread to other children or adults. If your child gets a vaccine, he or she should be protected from getting these diseases.

## How do I know if my child needs any vaccines?

Ask your family doctor or your child's school nurse. They can check your child's medical records to see which vaccines are needed.

## Are vaccines safe?

Yes, current vaccines are safe and effective. Vaccines are monitored for safety using information from health centers all over the world.

## Are there side effects?

Your child may have mild soreness where the shot is given, mild redness, and a slight fever. Serious side effects are rare. The benefits of getting vaccines are much higher than the risks for most people.

## Which vaccines should my child get and when?

*HepB vaccine.* This protects your child from hepatitis B, a serious liver infection. The vaccine

is given at birth, 1 to 2 months of age, and 6 to 18 months of age, and to older children who have not been vaccinated.

*Rotavirus vaccine.* This protects your child from a virus that can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and dehydration. The vaccine is given by mouth at 2, 4, and 6 months of age. It can only be used in babies.

*DTaP vaccine.* This protects your child from diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis. These are serious infections that can cause breathing problems, "lock jaw," severe coughing, and even death. The vaccine is given at ages 2, 4, 6, and 15 to 18 months. A booster dose (a dose to keep your child immune to the disease) is given at 4 to 6 years of age.

*Hib vaccine.* This protects your child against a serious infection that can cause meningitis, pneumonia, blood infection, joint infections, and death. The vaccine is given at ages 2, 4, 6 (with some brands), and 12 to 15 months of age.

*PCV vaccine.* This protects your child from a virus that can cause blood or ear infections, pneumonia, and meningitis (an infection of the fluid around the brain). The vaccine is given to babies at 2, 4, 6, and 12 to 15 months of age.

*IPV vaccine.* This protects your child from polio, a disease that can cause paralysis and death. The vaccine is given at 2, 4, and 6 to 18 months of age, and again at 4 to 6 years of age.

*Influenza vaccine.* This protects your child from the flu. There are two forms of flu vaccine: a shot and a nose spray. Children



## Vaccines for Your Child *(continued)*

older than 6 months can get the flu shot. Some children may need two doses if they are younger than 9 years and this is their first time getting it. Children older than 2 years who don't have asthma or any medical problems can get the vaccine as a nose spray.

**MMR vaccine.** This protects your child from measles, mumps, and rubella. These diseases can cause severe illness, brain infection, sterility, and damage to an unborn child. The vaccine may be given in a shot with the varicella vaccine, or separately, at ages 12 to 15 months, and again at 4 to 6 years.

**Varicella (*vair-uh-SELL-uh*) vaccine.** This protects your child from chickenpox. The vaccine is given at 12 months of age, and again at 4 to 6 years of age. Two doses are recommended for older children as well.

**HepA vaccine.** This protects your child from hepatitis A, another serious liver infection. The vaccine is given at 12 months of age, and again at 24 months of age. It should be given to older children who have not had the vaccine before, with at least six months between the two doses.

### What vaccines can my older child receive?

**Tdap vaccine.** This protects your child against pertussis, as well as diphtheria and tetanus. The vaccine is given once at age 11 to 12 years or

any time five years after their previous tetanus booster. Booster doses of the tetanus diphtheria (Td) vaccine are given every 10 years.

**HPV vaccine.** This protects your child from a virus that can cause genital warts and cervical cancer. The vaccine is given to girls 11 to 12 years of age, or later if they weren't vaccinated before, and is approved for girls and women ages 9 to 26.

**MCV vaccine.** This protects your child from a serious infection that can cause meningitis and death. The vaccine is given at 11 to 12 years of age, or to people starting high school or college (especially if they live in college dorms).

### Where can I find more information about vaccines?

Your family doctor

American Academy of Family Physicians  
Web site: <http://familydoctor.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>  
Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm> (for babies and children)  
Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/teen-schedule.htm> (for teenagers and young adults)

National Network for Immunization Information  
Web site: <http://www.immunizationinfo.org>

June 2008

---

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject. Copyright © 2008 American Academy of Family Physicians. Individuals may photocopy this material for their own personal reference, and physicians may photocopy for use with their own patients. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.