



Childhood Immunisations Part 2: Frequently asked questions

It is natural to have questions about your baby's immunisations. This second part of our Parent Tip series on immunisations provides answers to "Frequently Asked Questions" and has been written by leading national experts. Knowing what to expect on the day and being aware of common side effects can help to put your mind at rest. Do be sure to discuss any concerns you have with your health visitor too – they'll be happy to answer any other questions you may have about your baby's vaccinations.

It is recommended that your child receives their vaccines because vaccines protect them against serious diseases that can harm them.

Tips to make the vaccination appointment go more smoothly for both you and your baby

- Try to be calm yourself as your child will pick up on your anxiety very easily.
- Remind yourself that vaccines will protect your child for many years against a range of serious illnesses. Without vaccination, your child is at greater risk of getting these illnesses.
- You will feel calmer if you are not rushed, so leave enough time to get to the appointment and to undress your baby.
- Hold your baby tightly when the injections are being given. Talking in a reassuring voice will soothe your baby.
- Your baby or child may cry for a little while after a vaccination, but they should feel better after a cuddle.
- Feeding just before, during and after the injections are being given will help to comfort your baby.
- If your baby uses a dummy, this can also help to comfort them while the injection is being given or soon after. You can distract older children with a toy or by blowing bubbles.

[More information on Page 2](#)

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 15/03/2023 and will be reviewed again in 03/2026 and when new evidence becomes available.

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Frequently asked questions

- More tips on how to make the vaccination visit less distressing for you and your child are available at NHS UK: <http://bit.ly/1ipbr0o>

Are there any side effects to vaccinations?

- The most common side effects are pain and swelling where the needle went in. This usually passes in a few days and doesn't need treatment.
- Fever can be expected after any vaccine but is more common when MenB vaccine is given with other vaccines at 8 and 16 weeks. To reduce the chance of fever, it is recommended that you give your baby infant paracetamol soon after having the MenB vaccine. More details about the dose and timing of doses are provided in this leaflet: <http://bit.ly/2t2BFAA>
- Some babies get a mild fever and may be a bit off colour. This usually happens within 2-3 days of the vaccine.
- After MMR vaccine, a fever may come in 6-10 days after the vaccine. This vaccine can also cause some children to get symptoms which look like mild measles 7-10 days after the vaccine and mild mumps 21 days after the vaccine, neither of which are infectious.
- Most of the time a post-vaccine fever doesn't need treatment but always contact your GP if you're worried.
- If your baby seems miserable, they can have a dose of infant paracetamol to ease their symptoms. For specific advice about paracetamol, see: <https://bit.ly/3x8Ahfk>
- You can find more information on vaccine side effects in your child's Red Book (the personal child health record) in the section titled 'What to expect after vaccinations'.
- For more detailed information on each vaccine and its side effects, download the leaflet: Guide to Immunisations for babies born on or after 1 January 2020: <https://bit.ly/3PQNASV>

Is it safe to swim around the time of immunisations?

- The NHS recommends that you can take your baby swimming from a very young age; there is no need to wait until they have been vaccinated. However, some swimming pools say babies shouldn't swim until they have had all of their vaccines - this outdated advice probably dates back to when polio was common and people were concerned it could spread in busy places, such as public swimming pools.

Are some babies allergic to vaccinations?

- Very rarely, children can have an allergic reaction soon after immunisations; this reaction may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body.
- The nurse or GP giving the vaccine will know how to treat allergic reactions. If you're worried about your child having an allergic reaction, speak to your GP or health visitor.
- It's important that your child receives all of the recommended vaccines, so if they have had an allergic reaction in the past, it's a good idea to discuss this with your healthcare team.

What if my baby is ill on the day the immunisation is due?

- If your baby has a cold or is snuffly on the day the immunisation is due, it's fine to go ahead. However, if your baby has a temperature, it is advisable to defer the immunisations until the temperature resolves. The nurse delivering the immunisations will be happy to discuss this with you.

Can my baby have their vaccines separately?

Giving vaccines separately is not recommended. Combined vaccines are safe and help to reduce the number of injections your child needs.

The benefits include:

- avoiding any delay between injections that could risk illness
- reducing discomfort for your child
- reducing the number of appointments needed
- some private clinics in the UK offer single vaccines against measles, mumps and rubella, but these vaccines are unlicensed. This means there are no checks on their safety and effectiveness. The NHS does not keep a list of private clinics.
- as babies need 2 or 3 doses of each of the infant vaccines to develop full immunity, giving them all on separate occasions would mean that in their first year alone they would have to have 18 separate injections and 2 vaccines given by mouth - this would be very unpleasant for both baby and parent/carer.

Additional Reading:

The following web pages give further helpful advice on all aspects of immunising your baby:

NHS UK: <http://bit.ly/1LwSna>

NHS swimming advice: <https://bit.ly/2SblXhu>

Vaccine Knowledge Project: <http://bit.ly/2Rk6hrG>

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