



Immunisations: A Guide for Parents

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It might feel like the worst timing when at two months, just as you're starting to find a rhythm with your baby and possibly even getting some sleep, along comes the first set of immunisations. Over the next few months, you'll be invited by your GP surgery or baby clinic to have your baby vaccinated against infectious diseases such as whooping cough, diphtheria and polio. It is important that they have these jabs, but it can be upsetting for you if your little one develops a post-vaccination fever, or is generally out of sorts for a few days afterwards. This leaflet has been developed to give you practical advice about helping your child stay happy and comfortable after they have been vaccinated. If you have any doubts or concerns, always speak to a health care professional.

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Introduction

Thanks to the childhood vaccination programme, children in the UK are now protected against many dangerous diseases including polio, and many other potentially dangerous infections such as diphtheria. Meningitis C, for example, has been virtually eliminated since the MenC vaccination programme was introduced in 1999.

“The two public health interventions that have had the greatest impact on the world’s health are clean water and vaccines”

World Health Organization

Your child's immunisation schedule

It is easy to forget when your baby is due to have their jabs. Most GP surgeries will send you a reminder to make the necessary appointments, but the vaccinations timetable will also help you stay on track. The table below shows the timetable for immunisations (correct at time of print - January 2026) but your GP or health visitor should remind you when the next one is due. Try to stick to the immunisation schedule that your GP gives you, to ensure your child is protected as soon as possible.



8 weeks/2 months	What is it for?	How is it given?	Possible side effects*
6-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) vaccine - 1st dose	The 6-in-1 vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like polio and whooping cough.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • Fever • Irritability • Tiredness • Decreased appetite • Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
MenB vaccine - 1st dose	The MenB vaccine helps protect against meningococcal group B bacteria that can cause serious illnesses, including meningitis and sepsis.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Pain, swelling or redness at the injection site • Irritability or tiredness • Decreased appetite • Diarrhoea
Rotavirus vaccine - 1st dose	The rotavirus vaccine helps protect against rotavirus, a common cause of diarrhoea and vomiting.	Oral administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diarrhoea • Irritability



12 weeks/3 months	What is it for?	How is it given?	Possible side effects*
6-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) vaccine - 2nd dose	The 6-in-1 vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like polio and whooping cough.	Combined injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • Fever • Irritability • Tiredness • Decreased appetite • Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
MenB vaccine - 2nd dose	The MenB vaccine helps protect against meningococcal group B bacteria that can cause serious illnesses, including meningitis and sepsis.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Pain, swelling or redness at the injection site • Irritability or tiredness • Decreased appetite • Diarrhoea
Rotavirus vaccine - 2nd dose	The rotavirus vaccine helps protect against rotavirus, a common cause of diarrhoea and vomiting.	Oral administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diarrhoea • Irritability



16 weeks/4 months	What is it for?	How is it given?	Possible side effects*
6-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) vaccine - 3rd dose	The 6-in-1 vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like polio and whooping cough.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • Fever • Irritability • Tiredness • Decreased appetite • Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
Pneumococcal vaccine - 1st dose	The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like pneumonia and meningitis. It can also help protect against other illnesses such as sinusitis and ear infections.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • High temperature • Decreased appetite • Irritability • Tiredness

*This list of side effects is not exhaustive; for more information on vaccines and side effects, please visit the designated NHS page. For more information on the current immunisation schedule, visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>



12 months/1 year (children born after 1st January 2025)

Pneumococcal vaccine - 2nd dose	The pneumococcal vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like pneumonia and meningitis. It can also help protect against other illnesses such as sinusitis and ear infections.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • High temperature • Decreased appetite • Irritability • Tiredness
MMRV vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella & Varicella) - 1st dose	The MMRV vaccine protects against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (varicella), infections which spread easily between people and can lead to serious problems including meningitis, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), pneumonia, and hearing loss.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised, blotchy rash (similar to a measles rash), feeling unwell and a high temperature (which could occur around 6 to 10 days after vaccination) • Swelling around the face and aching in the joints (similar to a mild form of mumps) around 2 to 3 weeks after the vaccination • A spotty rash at injection site (which could occur 3 to 4 weeks after vaccination)
MenB vaccine - 3rd dose	The MenB vaccine helps protect against meningococcal group B bacteria that can cause serious illnesses, including meningitis and sepsis.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Pain, swelling or redness at the injection site • Irritability or tiredness • Decreased appetite • Diarrhoea



18 months (children born after 1st January 2025)

6-in-1 (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) vaccine - 4th dose	The 6-in-1 vaccine helps protect against serious illnesses like polio and whooping cough.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • Fever • Irritability • Tiredness • Decreased appetite • Vomiting and/or diarrhoea
MMRV vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella & Varicella) - 2nd dose	The MMRV vaccine protects against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (varicella), infections which spread easily between people and can lead to serious problems including meningitis, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), pneumonia, and hearing loss.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised, blotchy rash (similar to a measles rash), feeling unwell and a high temperature (which could occur around 6 to 10 days after vaccination) • Swelling around the face and aching in the joints (similar to a mild form of mumps) around 2 to 3 weeks after the vaccination • A spotty rash at injection site (which could occur 3 to 4 weeks after vaccination)



2-15 years

Children's flu vaccine (every year until children finish Year 11 of secondary school)	The children's flu vaccine helps protect against flu which can sometimes cause serious problems, such as pneumonia.	Nasal spray or injection (if spray unsuitable)	<p>Nasal spray:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocked or runny nose • Headache • Tiredness • Decreased appetite <p>Vaccine injection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain or soreness at site of injection • Aching body • Slightly raised temperature
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3 years and 4 months (children born after 1st July 2024)

4-in-1 (DTaP/IPV) - pre-school booster	The 4-in-1 pre-school booster helps protect against serious illnesses such as polio and tetanus. It's given to children aged 3 years, 4 months old before they start school.	Injection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain, redness and/or swelling at the injection site • High temperature • Irritability • Tiredness • Headache
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‘If only you could wrap him in cotton wool’

Preparation tips

If possible, try to avoid making appointments when your baby could be getting tired.

Remember to take your personal child health record (PCHR), sometimes known as the ‘red book’ to the appointment. This will help you keep track of you baby’s health and development.

Dress your baby in clothes that are easy to remove or roll up - babies under 12 months have injections in the thigh. Romper suits with poppers, or loose clothing is a good choice!

Allow plenty of time to get to your appointment. This will also ensure you have time to ask the nurse any questions you might have.

Try to stay calm during the vaccination - it’s natural to worry about your little one but it might make them anxious too!

The NHS advise using infant paracetamol to reduce the risk of fever after the MenB vaccination. If you do not have any at home already, visit your local pharmacy or supermarket to buy some. See pages 8-11 for more information about post-immunisation fever.

What happens at the appointment itself?

The injections are usually given by the practice nurse attached to your GP practice or baby clinic and the appointment usually only takes around 10 to 15 minutes.

If your baby is poorly, you may be advised to wait a week before they have their

immunisations. If your child has a minor sniffle, the nurse will take their temperature and assess whether they are fit enough to be vaccinated. You can talk through any questions or concerns you may have with the nurse.

The nurse or doctor will check that you know which diseases the vaccinations protect against and that you understand what side effects may occur and how to treat them. If your child has had previous vaccinations, let the nurse know before the injection about any reactions your child experienced.

Of course, it is natural to be worried when your little one is having a jab, particularly their first but try to stay calm. Your child may sense that you are anxious and may become worried or restless. If you are nervous about seeing your child having an injection, ask a nurse or another member of staff to hold them for you.

If your baby is receiving the Meningitis B vaccination along with their other routine immunisations at 2 or 4 months old, you could pick up some liquid infant paracetamol from your local pharmacy or supermarket to use when you get home to reduce the risk of fever.



“There’s just a little scratch coming...”

Top Tips:

- Cradling your baby or holding them in a position that allows skin-to-skin contact can be reassuring to them
- If you are breastfeeding, you can feed

your baby while the nurse is giving the vaccine as this can help to calm them. A dummy may also help to create a sense of comfort.



After the immunisation...

What happens directly afterwards?

Just in case your baby reacts to the injection, you'll be asked to stay in the surgery for about 10 minutes after the immunisation. It's normal for babies and young children to be upset for a little while after an immunisation by injection and your baby may be irritable and clingy for a day or two after their jabs. Don't worry if you see some mild redness or swelling at the injection sites, this is perfectly normal and should soon calm down.

So, what side effects could you expect?

Occasionally, some mild side effects will occur where the injection was given, including:

- *Swelling*
- *Redness*
- *A small hard lump where the injection was given*

Though it may be sore to touch, these symptoms will usually pass in 2-3 days. Some children may develop a high temperature (fever).

What temperature constitutes a fever?

Fever in children is usually defined as a temperature of 38°C or above.

Ask for an urgent GP appointment or call NHS 111 if:

- *Your child has other signs of illness, such as a rash, as well as a high temperature*
- *Your baby's temperature is 38°C (101°F) or higher if they're under 3 months old*
- *Your baby's temperature is 39°C (102°F) or higher if they're 3 to 6 months old*

Call 999 or go to A&E if a baby or young child has a high temperature and:

- *A rash that does not fade when you roll a glass over it*

Helping your child feel more comfortable when they have a fever

Calpol® has been trusted by parents and healthcare professionals for over 50 years. If your child has a fever, give them Calpol® Sugar Free Infant Suspension which is suitable from just 2 months (weighing over 4kg and not premature). It starts to work on fever in just 15 minutes, without being harsh on the tummy. Remember to always read the label to find out the correct dose and frequency for your child's age.

If your baby has a post-vaccination fever, you can also help ease their discomfort by:



Offering plenty of feeds - little and often work best if they have a reduced appetite.



Letting them wear just a vest.



Keep the room well aired and at a comfortable temperature.



Giving them plenty of kisses and cuddles!

What about febrile seizures (fits)?

In most cases, febrile seizures are linked to a fever caused by an infection but in rare cases they can occur after a child has a vaccination. Although febrile seizures can be frightening, but it's unlikely to harm your child or cause long-term effects.

Call 999 or go to A&E if your child:

- *Is having a seizure for the first time*
- *Has a seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes*
- *Is having difficulty breathing*
- *Has stiffness and twitching on only 1 side of their body*
- *Is more sleepy than usual for more than 1 hour after the seizure stops*
- *Has more than 1 seizure within 24 hours*

Do not take your child to A&E if they are still having a seizure or are unconscious, call 999 instead.

How to measure your child's temperature

Fever (raised temperature) is common after vaccination. If you think that your little one has a temperature, the best first step is to check using a thermometer.

Digital thermometers are widely available and will provide a fast and accurate reading of your child's temperature. However, there are a few factors that could affect the reading. For instance, if your child has been:



wrapped up tightly in a blanket or wearing lots of clothes



cuddling a hot water bottle



very active



in a very warm room



having a bath

In this case, let them cool down for a few minutes (without allowing them to become cold or shivery), and take their temperature again to see if there has been any change. There are three main ways to take a temperature:

Under the armpit

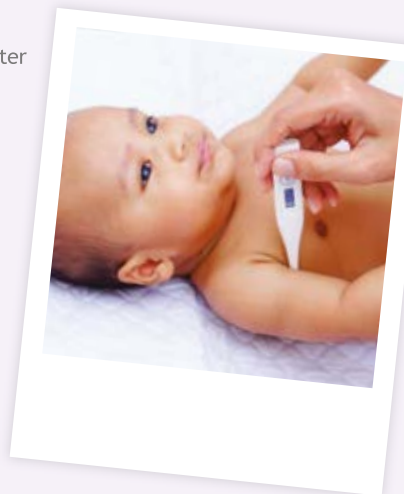
Hold your child comfortably on your knee and place the thermometer under their armpit. Gently but firmly hold their arm against their body to keep the thermometer in place for the time stated in the manufacturer's instructions.

Under the tongue

Taking an oral temperature is easy in an older, cooperative child. Younger children and babies may bite the thermometer if it is placed in their mouth.

In the ear

Ear thermometers are quick and don't disturb the child. But they can give misleading readings if they're not correctly placed in the ear. Always make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions.



Specific advice for after the Meningitis B vaccination

The MenB vaccination is usually given at your baby's first and second immunisation appointments at 2 months and 3 months of age, and a booster at 12 months.

How can I reduce the risk of fever?

Giving your child paracetamol soon after vaccination and not waiting for a fever to develop - will reduce the risk of your child having a fever. This may also help to relieve any pain at the site of the injection.

You should give the first dose of paracetamol as soon as possible after your vaccination visit. You should then give the second dose 4-6 hours later and the third dose 4-6 hours after that.



Current NHS advice states that paracetamol should be used to prevent or treat post-immunisation fever in babies after their MenB injections at 2 and 3 months; in this instance, ibuprofen is not currently recommended. Your nurse will give you more information about paracetamol at your vaccination appointment and you may be given a leaflet to take away with you with written instructions.

Just a heads-up, fever is particularly common with MenB vaccination:

Although fever can be expected after any vaccination, it is very common when the MenB vaccine is given with the other routine vaccines at two and three months. The fever tends to peak around six hours after vaccination and is nearly always gone completely within two days.

The fever shows your baby's body is responding to the vaccine (but don't worry - not getting a fever doesn't mean it hasn't worked). The level of fever depends on the individual child and does not indicate how well the vaccine will protect your baby.



After the MMRV vaccination

Because MMRV consists of four different vaccines (measles, mumps, rubella and varicella) within a single injection, these can each cause different side effects at different times post-injection. The side effects of the MMRV vaccination are usually mild. It's important to remember they're milder than the potential complications of measles, mumps, rubella or varicella (chickenpox).

- **About 6 days to 10 days post-injection** the measles vaccine may cause a fever, and a raised, blotchy measles-like rash. This is not infectious.
- **2-3 weeks post-injection** some children may experience swelling around the face and aching in the joints (similar to mild forms of mumps or rubella). This is not infectious.
- **3-4 weeks post-injection** the varicella vaccine may cause a spotty rash in the area where the injection was given (similar to a chickenpox rash). The spotty rash may contain infectious chickenpox virus and should be covered with clothes. As long as the spots are covered, children can go to nursery as normal.



Using paracetamol and ibuprofen in children

Of course, there are practical steps you can take to help soothe your baby's discomfort. Extra kisses and cuddles can work wonders in the short term, but your child may need something longer lasting to ease fever and discomfort. Calpol® Infant Suspension can help (suitable from 2+ months, weighing over 4kg and not premature). It contains

liquid paracetamol to provide gentle support for your baby's first immunisations. Calprofen® Ibuprofen Suspension can also be used for pain and fever relief (suitable from 3+ months, weighing 5kg), but is not recommended after the MenB vaccine. Always read the label and store out of the sight and reach of children.

CALPOL® Infant Suspension



From 2+ months
(weighing more
than 4kg
and not premature)

- Gets to work on fever in just 15 minutes
- Tough on pain and fever without being harsh on tummies
- Calpol is recommended by 99% of parents*
- Tasty **strawberry** flavour



Also available in three varieties:
Original, Sugar Free and Sugar Free
Colour Free.

CALPOL® Ibuprofen Suspension



From 3+ months
(weighing more
than 5kg)

- Gets to work on fever in just 15 minutes
- Works for up to 8 hours
- 98% of parents recommended Calprofen for effective pain and fever relief**
- Tasty **strawberry** flavour



*Kenvue UK Survey 2023, 298 out of 302 parents with children aged 6 months to 12 years would recommend Calpol to friends and family for pain and fever relief.

**Kenvue UK Survey 2023, 63 of 64 parents with children aged 6 months to 12 years who have used Calprofen recommend it for effective pain and fever relief.

Guidance on Calpol[®] (paracetamol) dosing*

Infant paracetamol suspension (120mg/5ml) has a good safety profile and is an effective method of short-term pain and fever relief in children when used appropriately.

Do not give to babies under 2 months old.

For Post-Immunisation Fever:

Child's age	How much	How often (in 24 hours)
For the relief of fever after vaccinations at 2, 3 and 4 months	2.5ml	Up to 4 times a day starting at the time of vaccination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not give more than 4 doses in any 24-hour period. Leave at least 4 hours between doses. If your baby still needs this medicine two days after receiving the vaccine talk to your doctor or pharmacist. <p>See page 11 for specific guidance on the MenB vaccine.</p>		

For Pain & Fever Relief:

Child's age	How much	How often
2-3 months for pain and other causes of fever	2.5ml if necessary, after 4-6 hours, give a second 2.5ml dose	Do not give more than 2 doses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only give if your baby weighs over 4kg and was born after 37 weeks. Leave at least 4 hours between doses. Do not give more than two doses. This is to ensure that fever that may be due to a serious infection is quickly diagnosed. If your child is still feverish after two doses, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. 		
Child's age	How much	How often (in 24 hours)
3-6 months	2.5ml	Up to 4 times
6-24 months	5ml	Up to 4 times
2-4 years	7.5ml (5ml + 2.5ml)	Up to 4 times
4-6 years	10ml (5ml +5ml)	Up to 4 times
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not give more than 4 doses in any 24-hour period. Leave at least 4 hours between doses. Do not give this medicine to your child for more than 3 days without speaking to your doctor or pharmacist. 		

*Remember that dosing instructions for ibuprofen are different, always read the Patient Information Leaflet for dosing information.

Guidance on Calprofen[®] (ibuprofen) dosing*

Infant ibuprofen suspension (100mg/5ml) also has a good safety profile and is an effective method of short-term pain and fever relief in children when used appropriately.

Do not give to babies under 3 months old. Consult your doctor.

For Post-Immunisation Fever:

Child's age	How much	How often (in 24 hours)
Babies and children 3 months and over (weighing over 5kg)	2.5ml	Up to 2 times a day
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If necessary, the second dose should be given 6 hours after the first one.• If the fever is not reduced you should consult your doctor.		

For Pain & Fever Relief:

Child's age	How much	How often (in 24 hours)
3-6 months (only give if your baby weighs over 5kg)	2.5ml	Up to 3 times. Do not use for more than 24 hours
6-12 months	2.5ml	Up to 3 times. Do not use for more than 3 days
1-2 years	2.5ml	Up to 4 times. Do not use for more than 3 days
3-7 years	5ml	Up to 4 times. Do not use for more than 3 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If symptoms persist or worsen consult your doctor.• Doses should usually be given every 6-8 hours. Leave at least 4 hours between doses.• For further advice, always read the label.		

*Remember that dosing instructions for paracetamol are different, always read the Patient Information Leaflet for dosing information.

Milestone Timeline



