Hib
New booster for children under 4

immunisation
the safest way to protect your child
Hib disease causes many illnesses including meningitis (see the table on pages 8 and 9) and it is increasing. The best way to stop this is for every child between the ages of 6 months and 4 years to have a fourth (booster) Hib vaccination.

This leaflet describes why Hib has increased and what you need to do to make sure that your child stays protected against Hib meningitis and the other serious illnesses that Hib can cause.

How can we be certain that Hib disease is increasing?
In the UK, there are very good systems for monitoring disease and the effect that immunisations have. These systems revealed the following information (see graph):

- Before 1992, there were about 800 cases of Hib disease every year – causing 150 children to be permanently brain-damaged and around 30 deaths.
- The Hib vaccine was introduced in 1992, and soon after this Hib disease had reduced to 25 cases and about one death each year.
- In 2002, routine monitoring revealed an increase to 122 cases (provisional data).
- Extra studies of the disease in 2002 confirmed that this rise was continuing and that steps were needed to stop it.
Hib vaccine introduced

Source: PHLS, HRUSCDSC

Laboratory reports of Hib disease in children under 4 years of age in England and Wales (1990 to 2002).

**What has caused this increase?**
There are several possible explanations:

- This is a short-term rise in disease and it may go down again naturally.

- When Hib vaccine was first introduced, all children aged up to 4 years were vaccinated in a catch-up campaign and Hib disease was quickly brought under control. It may be that this catch-up effect is now wearing off and that a booster dose of Hib may need to be added to the childhood immunisation schedule.

- Some of the new cases are in children who have not been vaccinated. So, herd immunity (when enough people have been vaccinated to stop circulation of a virus or bacterium, then those who have not been vaccinated are protected) may be lower now than was first achieved.

- In 2000/2001, there was a widespread shortage in the supply of DTwP-Hib vaccine that is given to babies at 2, 3 and 4 months to protect them against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough
and Hib. To make sure that children were not left unprotected, another vaccine – DTaP-Hib – was used instead. However, this particular vaccine, although it was perfectly safe, produced a lower protection against Hib than expected and this added to the increase in Hib that was already happening.

Is this particular DTaP-Hib still being used?
No, DTaP-Hib is no longer being used routinely for primary childhood immunisations.

So what happens now?
To get the best possible protection against Hib, all children over 6 months and under 4 years of age on 1 April 2003 should have a fourth (booster) dose of single Hib vaccine. Babies who reach 6 months of age during the immunisation campaign will be invited for their extra dose of Hib soon after their 6-month birthday.

Do I need to do anything to get my child vaccinated?
No, your local surgery or child health department will send you an appointment to bring your child for a booster dose of Hib vaccine.
Can my child get Hib disease from the vaccination?
Hib vaccine is not a live vaccine so there is absolutely no risk of your child getting Hib infection or disease from the vaccination.

Will there be any side effects from the vaccine?
There are no known serious side effects of the Hib vaccine. It has an excellent safety record with more than 24 million doses being used in the UK over the last 10 years.

There may be some swelling and redness where the injection is given – this usually lasts no longer than 24 hours. Your child may have a slight temperature and be a
little unwell. If this happens give your child plenty of cool drinks and some paracetamol or ibuprofen liquid.

Always read the instructions on the bottle carefully and give the correct dose for the age of your child. This is especially important for ibuprofen liquid, where some dosages are only appropriate for children at certain ages and weights.

Never give aspirin to children under 16 years of age.
Are there any reasons why my child shouldn’t have the booster?
There are very few reasons why your child should not be immunised. However, you should tell your doctor, nurse or health visitor if your child:

- has a high fever
- has a bleeding disorder
- has ever had convulsions, or
- has suffered a bad reaction to any of their previous immunisations

Does my child have to have this booster?
In the UK, parents can decide whether to have their children immunised or not. This booster is recommended as it will offer your child important extra protection, especially against Hib meningitis.