Pre-school immunisations
A guide to vaccinations for 3- to 5-year-olds
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Routine childhood immunisation programme – a quick reference guide to your child’s immunisations
Introduction

This guide is for parents or guardians of children aged three to five years old. It provides information on the routine immunisations that are given to children before they start school to protect them from serious childhood diseases. It describes these diseases and explains why young children need protection against them. It also answers some of the most common questions about pre-school immunisation.

If you have more questions or you want more information, talk to your doctor, practice nurse or health visitor.

You can also visit the websites at www.immunisation.nhs.uk and www.mmrthefacts.nhs.uk, or call NHS Direct on 0845 4647
Timetable of pre-school immunisations

These immunisations are due about three years after your child has completed the immunisations they had when they were two, three and four months old. You will receive an appointment for you to bring your child for their pre-school immunisations.

The table below shows the pre-school immunisations your child will be offered. These immunisations will make sure that your child has the best protection against serious childhood diseases as they grow up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine</th>
<th>How it is given</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and polio (dTaP/IPV or DTaP/IPV)</td>
<td>One injection</td>
<td>This is a booster dose of the vaccine your child had as a baby, but without the Hib part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)</td>
<td>One injection</td>
<td>This is a second dose of the MMR vaccine. (If your child has not had the first dose yet, it should be given now and they should have their second dose in three months' time.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common questions about pre-school immunisations

Why does my child need to be immunised at this age?

Protection (immunity) against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio can fade over time. Also, immunity to measles, mumps and rubella may not develop after a single dose of the MMR vaccine. The pre-school immunisations—often called pre-school boosters—will top up your child’s level of antibodies (the substances our bodies produce to fight off disease and infection) and help to keep them protected.

When you take your child for their pre-school immunisations, you will have the chance to make sure their other immunisations are up to date.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines contain a small part of the bacterium or virus that causes a disease, or tiny amounts of the chemicals the bacterium produces. Vaccines work by causing the body’s immune system to make antibodies. If your child comes into contact with the infection, the antibodies will recognise it and be ready to protect him or her. Because vaccines have been used so successfully in the UK, diseases such as polio have disappeared from this country.
If your child missed any of their immunisations as a baby or toddler, this is a good time to ask the surgery or clinic about catch-up doses. It is never too late to have your child immunised. You don’t have to start the course of immunisations from the beginning again, but you can catch up on them and make sure your child is fully protected.

How do we know that vaccines are safe?

Before a vaccine is allowed to be used, its safety and effectiveness have to be thoroughly tested. After they have been licensed, the safety of vaccines continues to be monitored. Any rare side effects that are discovered can then be assessed further. All medicines can cause side effects, but vaccines are among the very safest. Research from around the world shows that immunisation is the safest way to protect your child’s health.