What happens after the injection?

- You will normally be given an injection in the upper part of the left arm.

- Within two to six weeks of the injection a small spot will appear. This may feel quite sore for a few days but should heal if you don’t cover it. You may be left with a scar.

- Even though the scar may take several weeks to heal, it’s fine to have a bath or shower as normal and to go swimming after having the injection.

- Occasionally, a shallow ulcer (an open wound that does not heal) may develop which may take several months to heal. If the ulcer is oozing and needs to be covered, use a dry dressing – not a plaster – until a scab forms. If you are worried, or the injection site becomes secondarily infected, see your doctor.

- A plaster can be used if you go swimming, for example, but only for a short period otherwise healing will be delayed causing a larger scar.

If you want more information on TB, the BCG vaccine or any other immunisations, speak to the school nurse or your own doctor or nurse. Or visit our website www.immunisation.nhs.uk or call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47.

Remember, prevention is simple, but treating TB can take a long time.
This leaflet is about an immunisation called BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin) that most people receive to protect them against a serious disease called TB (tuberculosis). The immunisation is given as an injection.

What is the BCG vaccine?
An injection of the BCG vaccine contains a very weak form of the germ which causes TB. Because it is weak, the vaccine doesn't cause TB but it helps the body to start building protection (immunity) against the disease.

What is TB?
TB is an infection that usually affects the lungs. It can also affect other parts of the body such as the glands, brain and bones. With treatment, it is possible to make a full recovery from the disease.

What are the symptoms of TB?
Although TB is not very common, everyone should know the symptoms to look out for. The most common are:
- a cough (which can last for weeks);
- a fever;
- sweating, especially at night;
- weight loss;
- feeling tired;
- coughing up blood.

How can you catch TB?
You can only catch TB from someone who is already infected – usually someone who has the infection in their lungs and who is coughing. Coughing produces tiny drops of spit which contain germs (bacteria). These germs can stay in the air for long periods of time and, if you breathe them in, they can cause the infection. As a general rule, TB is spread only after quite close and long contact with an infectious person, such as from living in the same house as someone who has the disease.

Do a lot of people catch TB?
In some parts of the world, TB is very common and increasing. Worldwide, TB kills around 2 million people every year. As more and more people travel around the world, they can come into contact with the disease or bring the disease into this country. Although TB is no longer common in the UK, since the early 1990s the number of cases has risen to around 7000 a year.

Do I need to be immunised against TB?
You will be given a skin test (Heaf test) to check whether or not you need a BCG immunisation.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have already been immunised, for example some people are immunised as babies. If so, you should not need another injection.

The Heaf test
- A small amount of special solution is spread on your forearm and a stamp with six tiny needles lightly scratches the surface of the skin to let the solution in.
- About a week later, the nurse or doctor looks at the test area to check the reaction. They will tell you if you need an injection or not.
- If your skin does not react, you are not immune to TB and you will need a BCG injection. If you have a reaction you may have been exposed to TB and may need further tests.