



Immunisation Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is immunisation?

Immunisation is a global health and development success story that saves millions of lives every year.

The national Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) schedule has been in use at public health facilities since 2016. The purpose of the EPI is to stop death and reduce suffering from preventable childhood diseases with immunisation.

We strongly advise parents and caregivers to protect their children from infectious diseases by getting them vaccinated.

2. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines stimulate the body's natural defences/immune system to produce special proteins called antibodies. The antibodies protect the body when it becomes infected.

Unlike bacteria and viruses, vaccines do NOT make you ill.

3. Are vaccines safe?

Vaccines are very safe and remain the most cost effective public health intervention currently available. If you are concerned about vaccine safety, speak to a Health Care Worker.

4. What childhood diseases do vaccines prevent?

The **BCG or Bacillus Calmette Guerin vaccine** protects against severe TB. Children receive the vaccine at birth, however, if your baby did not receive the vaccine at birth, he/she will be immunised at their six-week immunisation visit.

The **OPV or Oral Polio Vaccine** protects against polio - an infection caused by polioviruses. It attacks the nerves causing weakness or paralysis of the leg and/or arm, and in severe cases, the respiratory muscles.

The **RV or Rotavirus vaccine** protects against diarrhoea caused by the rotavirus.

The **DTaP-IPV-HiB-HBV vaccines** protect against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, Haemophilus Influenza Type B and Hepatitis B.

- Diphtheria is a disease that makes it difficult to breathe.
- Tetanus is an infection that occurs when a toxin produced by a tetanus germ from the soil enters a cut or wound. The chances of dying from this condition are very high
- Pertussis (whooping cough) is a respiratory infection accompanied by strenuous coughing bouts that make it hard for a child to eat, drink or even breathe.
- Polio is an infection caused by viruses that attack the nerves. This causes weakness or paralysis of the leg and/or arm, and in severe cases, the respiratory muscles.
- Haemophilus Influenza Type B (HiB) is an illness caused by the HiB bacteria. Death from HiB disease is common in children under the age of one.
- Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver that can result in liver damage, liver cancer and death later in life.

The **PCV or Pneumococcal Conjugated Vaccine** protects against meningitis, otitis media (ear infection), pneumonia, bacteraemia (bacterial infection in the blood).

The **Measles Vaccine** protects against measles, an infection that can lead to diarrhoea and dehydration, deafness, eye complications, pneumonia, brain damage and even death.

5. What happens when a child is late with getting their vaccinations?

It is never too late to vaccinate. The Health Care Worker at the clinic will advise on how to catch-up on the missed vaccines.

6. What happens if you lose the Road to Health Booklet (RTHB)?

Inform the Health Care Worker who will issue you with a new copy.

7. What should I bring along when getting my child vaccinated?

- At the first clinic visit, the parent or guardian's ID as well as the child's birth certificate and Road to Health Booklet (RTHB) is required to open a folder.
- If you do not have these documents, you can still visit the clinic to have your child immunised.
- For follow-up visits, you will only need to provide the RTHB.

8. Which symptoms do children display after vaccination?

- Like any medicine, vaccines can cause side effects such as a sore arm or a mild fever; however, these are usually short-lived. Side effects that are more serious are possible, but extremely rare.
- Speak to the Health Care Worker on how to manage any side effects that may occur.
- Do **NOT** apply any ointment to the vaccination site.

9. Is there anything I should know before I take my child to be immunised?

- Dress your child in clothing that allows for easy access to their arm/leg.
- Bring a toy with to distract your child.
- Remember that your feelings influence your child, so try to remain calm before and after the vaccination.
- After the healthcare worker administers the vaccine, congratulate your child on their bravery. This will have a positive effect on future visits.
- Do not use vaccination as a threat when your child misbehaves at home, this could make your child fearful of visiting the clinic or a doctor in future.