

Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridgeshire



Neonatal Network

Parent Information: Immunisation

Why are babies immunised?

Babies and children are immunised to protect them from serious childhood diseases. The immunisations are given according to the schedule recommended by the Department of Health and it is vital that babies are kept up to date with their programme. The vaccines that are given stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies without having to become infected with the actual disease

When are immunisations given?

The first sets of immunisations are given at 2, 3 and 4 months of age – even if your baby was born prematurely. They are given according to the baby's *actual age*.

The initial course of immunisation protects against:

- Diphtheria (D)
- Tetanus (T)
- Pertussis (P) (Whooping Cough)
- Haemophilus Influenza (Hib)
- Polio
- Meningococcal C
- Pneumococcal

How are the immunisations given?

D, T, P, Hib and Polio are combined as one injection into the thigh. The pneumococcal and Meningitis C vaccines are either combined with the above injection or given separately dependent on the schedule. On each occasion your baby will have two injections.

Will I be able to talk to staff about the immunisations?

A doctor or nurse will explain the programme and possible side effects, to you *before* your baby receives the first set of immunisations. You will be able to discuss any issues at this time and ask any questions you may have.

Are there any reasons for not having my baby immunised?

Some parents worry whether their baby should receive immunisations because they fear that problems might occur, or they have a family history of certain illnesses. In reality there are very few reasons for not giving immunisations and most babies can be immunised. The Department of Health (DoH, 1996) advises that **immunisations CAN be given EVEN if the following conditions are present:**

- A family history of adverse reactions to immunisation
 - A previous history of Pertussis (whooping cough), measles, mumps or rubella (German measles)
 - Cerebral Palsy, Down's Syndrome, or other stable neurological conditions
 - Asthma, eczema, hay fever or snuffles
 - Antibiotic treatment or treatment with locally-acting steroids (topical or inhaled)
 - Child's mother is pregnant or child is being breastfed
 - History of jaundice after birth
 - Regardless of current weight
 - The child is over the age usually recommended for immunisation
 - Receiving replacement steroids (but not if at an immunosuppressive dose)
 - Prematurity – immunisation should not be postponed
- However, if you have any concerns you should discuss them with staff ***before*** giving your consent to the immunisations.

Can I be with my baby when the immunisations are given?

If you wish to be present when your baby receives his immunisations you will be most welcome. If on the other hand you prefer to stay away, we would fully understand.

Will there be any side effects?

Some babies may develop redness and swelling at the injection sites. Some become irritable and grizzly for a few hours after immunisation and they may develop a temperature. Your baby will be prescribed paracetamol to help relieve these symptoms.

When will the next immunisations be given?

The child health department will be informed that your baby has received the first part of their course of immunisations and once discharged from hospital you will be informed by your Health Visitor or GP (providing you have registered the baby with your GP) when the next set are due.

Is my baby likely to need any other immunisations?

In some situations the doctors may recommend that your baby requires other immunisations. If your doctor feels that your baby is at greater risk from winter colds then other vaccinations may be given to prevent respiratory syncytial virus or 'flu (if your baby is six months old). If this is necessary it will be discussed with you.

The government are introducing a new programme for BCG vaccination in which babies at risk of acquiring Tuberculosis (TB) because they live in an area where it has become common or whose parents or grandparents were born in a country where TB occurs frequently. These babies will be vaccinated now rather than during their teenage years. There is a separate leaflet for the BCG vaccination, which the staff will give you or the information is available at:

www.immunisation.org.uk/files/bcgbaby.pdf

Consent

After you have read this information and you have fully understood why your baby requires this immunisation, the doctors or nurses will ask you to sign a consent form for the procedure. The doctors and nurses will discuss any issues you may have about the procedure. A copy of the consent form will be given to you, which can be retained in your child health booklet for future reference.

For more information visit the website for NHS immunisation information: www.immunisation.org.uk

The Norfolk Suffolk & Cambridgeshire Neonatal Network is committed to the highest standards of quality and every attempt has been made to present up to date and accurate information. This information does not constitute health or medical advice and will not necessarily reflect treatment at other hospitals outside the NSC Neonatal Network. If you have any questions, please ask your doctor. No liability can be taken as a result of using this information.