

Look out for one or more of the following symptoms:

- a high-pitched, moaning cry
- irritable when picked up
- drowsy, difficult to wake
- stiff with jerky movements (convulsions/fits)
- pale, blotchy skin or turning blue
- fever, with cold hands and feet
- red or purple spots that do not fade under pressure. (Do the glass test explained below.)

Press the side of a clear glass against the rash and see if the rash fades and loses colour. If it doesn't, contact your doctor immediately.



If your child becomes ill with one or more of the signs or symptoms described above, contact your doctor urgently.

If you are still worried after getting advice, trust your instincts and take your child to your nearest hospital with an emergency department.

Further information

Immunisation for babies up to a year old contains more detailed information about the routine childhood immunisation programme. Ask your health visitor for a copy if you were not given one soon after the birth of your baby.

Children born prematurely should continue to follow the normal immunisation schedule – see the leaflets *Immunisations for babies just after their first birthday*, *Immunisations for pre-school children three years and four months old* and *Teenage immunisations for ages 14 to 18*.

You can also visit: www.publichealth.hscni.net or www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/childhood-immunisation-programme

Routine childhood immunisation programme

When to immunise	Diseases vaccine protects against	How it is given
2 months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, Hib and hepatitis B Rotavirus Meningococcal B infection	One injection Orally One injection
3 months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and hepatitis B Pneumococcal infection Rotavirus	One injection One injection Orally
4 months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, Hib and hepatitis B Meningococcal B infection	One injection One injection
Just after the first birthday	Measles, mumps and rubella Pneumococcal infection Hib and meningococcal C infection Meningococcal B infection	One injection One injection One injection One injection
Every year from 2 years old up to and including Y12	Influenza	Nasal spray or injection
3 years and 4 months old	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio Measles, mumps and rubella	One injection One injection
Young people aged 12 to 13 years	Conditions caused by human papillomavirus, including cervical cancer (in girls) and cancers of the mouth, throat, anus and genitals (in boys and girls) and genital warts.	One injection
14 to 18 years old	Tetanus, diphtheria and polio Meningococcal ACWY	One injection One injection

If your child has missed out on any of these vaccines talk to your GP or health visitor.

If you would like further information about immunisation, visit www.publichealth.hscni.net or www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/childhood-immunisation-programme



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Immunisation for premature babies



'The two public health interventions that have had the greatest impact on the world's health are clean water and vaccines'

World Health Organization

What is immunisation and why is it needed?

Immunisation is a way of protecting ourselves from serious diseases. There are some diseases that can kill children or cause lasting damage to their health. Immunisations are given to prepare your child's immune system (the body's natural defence system) to fight off those diseases when your child comes into contact with them.



When should my baby be immunised?

It is important that your baby has their immunisations at the right age (see the back cover). This will help to keep the risk of your baby catching a serious disease as low as possible. The risk of side effects from some vaccines may increase if you put them off.

My baby was born early. When should premature babies have their first immunisation?

Premature babies have a higher risk of infection. They should be immunised in line with the recommended schedule from two months after birth, no matter how premature they were. This may happen while your baby is in hospital, you will need to discuss this with your doctor.

What happens at the appointment?

The doctor or nurse will explain the immunisation process to you, and answer any questions you have. The vaccine is injected into the muscle of the thigh. If your baby was born very prematurely then he/she may still be in hospital when the first routine immunisation is due.

Are there any reasons why my baby should not be immunised?

There are very few reasons why babies cannot be immunised. The vaccines should not be given to babies who have had:

- a confirmed anaphylactic reaction (severe allergic reaction) to a previous dose of the vaccine, or

- a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to neomycin, streptomycin, or polymyxin B (antibiotics used in vaccines).

If your baby's immune system is 'suppressed' (because they are having treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer), then your baby may not be able to have some vaccines. Your doctor or practice nurse should get advice from a specialist.

There are no other medical reasons why these vaccines should definitely not be given.

Dealing with common side effects

There may be redness, soreness or tenderness where the injection is given and a few babies may develop a mild fever. Make sure you keep your child cool by:

- giving them plenty of fluids;
- making sure they don't have too many layers of clothes or blankets on;
- and giving infant paracetamol liquid – check the dose with your doctor.

Fever is more common after the MenB vaccine. To prevent this it is recommended that babies are given three doses of infant paracetamol after their MenB vaccines at 2 and 4 months of age. It is important to make sure you have some infant paracetamol at home before your

baby has his/her first MenB vaccine. If your baby was born before 32 weeks' gestation then your doctor should prescribe the correct dose of paracetamol for your baby's current weight. For more information about paracetamol, see the leaflet *Immunisation for babies up to a year old*.

Do not give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16.

If you are concerned about your baby at any time then trust your instincts and speak to your GP.

For more information about side effects, see *Immunisation for babies up to a year old*.

Watch out for meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning)

Hib, MenB, and pneumococcal vaccines protect against the most important bacteria causing meningitis and septicaemia in children and young people. However, as these diseases can be caused by many other bacteria and viruses, it is important to know the signs and symptoms of these illnesses.

Early symptoms of meningitis include fever, being irritable and restless, vomiting and refusing food – symptoms that are also common with colds and flu. But a baby with meningitis or septicaemia can become seriously ill within hours.