NHS

## Childhood vaccinations

# Giving your child the brightest and healthiest start in life

Vaccination is your choice. We want to give you all the information you need to make the right decision for you and your family.

Bright Start in Life

Visit our website **northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/BrightStart** for more information or scan the QR code.

# Why vaccines are important

The decision about whether to get your children vaccinated is yours and it's natural to have questions or concerns about whether it's right for you and your child.

Getting vaccinated is a normal part of growing up in the UK. It is one of many things people do to protect their children from serious diseases like meningitis, polio, measles, mumps and rubella.

As a parent or guardian, you'll know how easily infections can spread among children and how difficult it can be to prevent this from happening. Vaccination gives peace of mind that your child is protected from becoming seriously ill.

Vaccines save millions of lives all over the world and provide the best protection for your child. They also help stop dangerous diseases from spreading in local communities.

So, when you take your child for their vaccines, you're not only protecting them but you're also helping to keep other people you care about safe too.

### How do vaccines protect my child?

Vaccines help your child's immune system learn how to protect the body from dangerous diseases before they catch them by mimicking an infection and teaching the body to create disease-fighting antibodies. Antibodies make the body's natural defences strong and stop your child catching a virus or becoming seriously unwell.

Staying up to date with the schedule of routine childhood vaccinations gives your child the best protection against deadly diseases.

Visit our website for more information about how vaccinations can keep your children safe from serious illness **northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/BrightStart**



# How to get a vaccination

NHS childhood vaccinations are free. Your GP practice will contact you when your child is due. You may receive an invite by letter, phone call, text or email. If you are unsure if your child is up to date, contact your GP.

If you are not registered with a GP, you can find out how to register on our website or walk into your local practice.

Anyone in England can register with a GP surgery for free. You do not need any proof of address or immigration status, ID or an NHS number.

### What if my child has missed one of their vaccines?

If you are worried your child has missed one of their vaccines, there is still time to catch up. You can contact your GP who will be able to help you.

In the UK, a child health record, called a Red Book, is given to parents or carers when a baby is born. The Red Book records information about your child's health and development. It also records details about their vaccinations. You can check the Red Book to make sure your child is up to date with their vaccines.

# At what age should my child have their vaccines?

Staying up to date with your child's vaccinations will provide them with the best protection against deadly diseases.

| Age | Vaccine | Diseases the vaccine protects against |
|---|---|---|
| 8 weeks | 6-in-1 vaccine (1st dose) | Polio, hepatitis B, whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria, Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b) and tetanus |
| | Rotavirus vaccine (1st dose) | Rotavirus (which causes diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pain) |
| | MenB vaccine (1st dose) | Meningococcal group B bacteria which can cause meningitis and sepsis |
| 12 weeks | 6-in-1 vaccine (2nd dose) | Polio, hepatitis B, whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria, Hib(Haemophilus influenzae type b) and tetanus |
| | Rotavirus vaccine (2nd dose) | Rotavirus (which causes diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pain) |
| | MenB (2nd dose) | Meningococcal group B bacteria which can cause meningitis and sepsis |
| 16 weeks | 6-in-1 vaccine (3rd dose) | Polio, hepatitis B, whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria, Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b) and tetanus |
| | Pneumococcal vaccine (1st dose) | Protects against types of bacterial infections that causes sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia |
| 1 year | MMR vaccine (1st dose) (Renamed MMRV from 1 January 2026) | Measles, Mumps, Rubella (and Chickenpox from 1 January 2026) |
| | Pneumococcal vaccine (2nd dose) | Protects against types of bacterial infections that causes sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia |
| | MenB vaccine (3rd dose) | Meningococcal group B bacteria which can cause meningitis and sepsis |
| 1 year and 6 months (18 months) | MMR vaccine (2nd dose) (Renamed MMRV from 1 January 2026) | Measles, Mumps, Rubella (and Chickenpox from 1 January 2026) |
| | 6-in-1 vaccine (4th dose) | Polio, hepatitis B, whooping cough (pertussis), diphtheria, Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b) and tetanus |
| 2-16 years | Children's flu vaccine (every year) | Flu (influenza) which can cause pneumonia |
| 3 years and 4 months | MMR vaccine (2nd dose for children born on or before 30 June 2024) (Renamed MMRV from 1 January 2026) | Measles, Mumps, Rubella (and Chickenpox from 1 January 2026) |
| | 4-in-1 pre-school booster vaccine | Tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria, and polio |
| 12-13 years | HPV vaccine | Human papillomavirus (HPV) which can cause certain types of cancer including cervical cancer |
| 14 years | 3-in-1 teenage booster vaccine (Td/IPV vaccine) | Polio, diphtheria, and tetanus |
| | MenACWY vaccine | 4 different strains of the meningococcal bacteria – A, C, W and Y which can cause meningitis, septicaemia (blood poisoning) and sepsis |

In Newham all babies are offered the BCG vaccine against tuberculosis (TB) within the first 28 days of birth. Outside of Newham, the BCG vaccine is only offered to babies at higher risk of getting TB. If you live in Newham and your baby hasn't been offered their BCG vaccine within 28 days of birth, text **07398 704143** or email **newham.bcg@nhs.net**

## What diseases do these vaccines protect my child against?

**Diphtheria**
Diphtheria is a highly contagious infection that can affect the nose, throat, and sometimes the skin. It can be a serious illness and can be fatal, especially in children, if not treated quickly.

**Flu**
Flu can be a very unpleasant illness for children. It can lead to more serious problems developing, such as bronchitis and pneumonia which can require hospital treatment.

**HPV**
Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that can spread through skin contact (usually when having sex). Some types of HPV can cause cancers like cervical cancer.

**Measles**
Measles is an infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious problems, especially in babies and children. It usually starts with cold-like symptoms and a rash and in some cases can lead to major complications and require hospital treatment.

**MenB and MENACWY**
Meningococcal infections can cause serious illnesses such as meningitis and blood poisoning (sepsis) which can be life-threatening.

**Mumps**
Mumps is a contagious viral infection that can cause painful swelling in the face and in some cases, particularly in adulthood, can lead to more serious complications.

**Pneumococcal**
Pneumococcal infections can lead to pneumonia, sepsis and meningitis. Babies and young children are vulnerable to serious illness from pneumococcal infections.

**Polio**
Polio is a serious infection that's now very rare because of the vaccination programme. Polio can cause flu-like symptoms but in some cases, polio can lead to problems occurring with the brain and nerves which can cause muscle weakness (paralysis) and be life-threatening.

**Tetanus**
Tetanus is a serious, life-threatening infection caused by bacteria getting into a wound. It can cause a stiff jaw, muscle spasms, high temperature, difficulty breathing and fits.

**Whooping cough (pertussis)**
Whooping cough is an infection of the lungs that can make babies and young children very unwell. Babies under 6 months have an increased risk of developing breathing difficulties and pneumonia which can require hospital treatment.



## Is it safe to vaccinate my child?

Vaccination is the safest, most effective way of protecting your child from serious illness.

Vaccines undergo rigorous safety checks and are thoroughly tested before they are given to people to make sure they are safe for you and your family to take.

Vaccines are then carefully monitored, and any rare side effects are reported. Vaccinations have helped keep millions of children all over the world safe from the risks of deadly diseases.

Since vaccines were introduced, diseases like smallpox and tetanus, which used to kill or disable millions of people, have now disappeared or are seen very rarely.

**Are there side effects?**

Like with any medicine, there can be some mild side effects, but these won't last long, and some children won't experience any side effects at all.

Common mild side effects may include:

- Redness or soreness in the area where the vaccine injection has been given
- A high temperature
- Feeling a little unwell, being sick or having a lack of appetite
- Feeling upset, increased irritability or crying

It's important to keep in mind that the risk of your child becoming seriously unwell from these dangerous diseases is far greater than the risk of minor side effects.

**How do I find out about vaccines that contain pork gelatine?**

Some MMR/MMRV vaccines and the flu nasal spray do contain a small amount of pork gelatine. However, there are alternatives available for both which you can have instead that do not contain pork gelatine. If you have any concerns about the ingredients in your child's vaccination, or would like an alternative, please speak with your GP.

# How can I find out more about vaccinations?

It's okay to have questions about whether vaccination is the right decision for your child. But it is important to be mindful about where you receive your information from.

Anti-vaccine stories and false information can often be spread online through social media or through word of mouth.

Always get your vaccine and health information from trusted sources, such as the NHS or World Health Organisation (WHO).

If you have any questions about vaccinations, you can speak to your GP, midwife or your health visitor who will be able to talk through any concerns or queries so that you can make the right decision for you and your family.

All the current evidence tells us that getting vaccinated is much safer than not getting vaccinated.

Visit our website for more information, as well as tips to help your child's vaccine appointment go smoothly. You will also find real life stories from parents about getting their children vaccinated.

Translations and alternative formats are available on our website.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE • VISIT OUR WEBSITE •

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