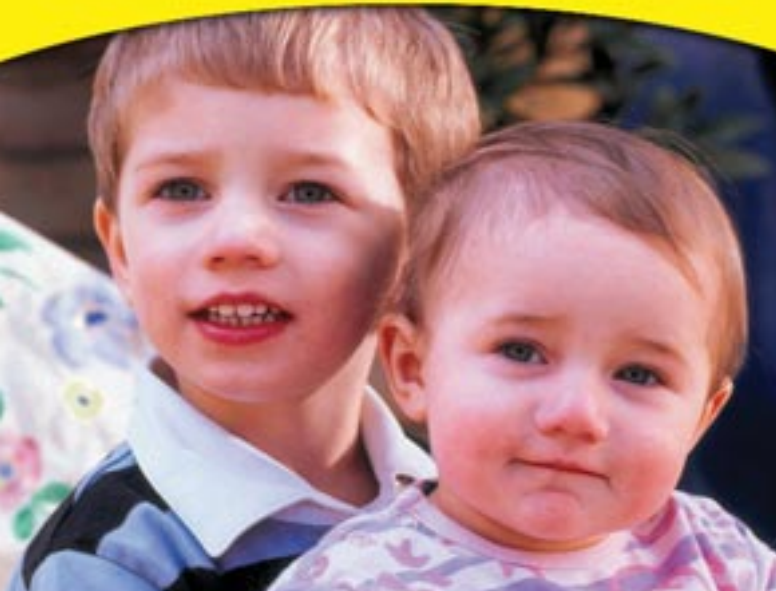


Hib

Make sure your child is protected



Be wise - immunise

In 2003, all children between the ages of six months and four years will be offered a booster to give them added protection from Hib. Hib is an infection that can cause serious illness in young children, including meningitis, painful joints, pneumonia and epiglottitis (swelling of the throat, leading to a severe blockage of the airway). Most children who get Hib infections become very ill and need hospital care. Hib leads to death in 1 in 20 cases.

Is this a new vaccine for Hib?

No. Hib vaccine was introduced in the UK childhood immunisation programme in 1992 to protect all babies and young children against Hib disease. It is given to babies at 2, 3 and 4 months of age together with diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine. Other countries routinely offer a fourth booster dose to children under four years of age as they are most at risk. Hib infection is rare in children over four years.

Why should my child have this booster?

A slight, gradual increase in the number of Hib cases has been reported recently. In order to get the best possible protection against Hib, doctors have recommended that all children over six months and under four years of age on 1 April 2003 should have a booster dose of Hib vaccine. Any babies who become six months of age during the course of the campaign will also be offered an extra dose of Hib vaccine. This will ensure more complete protection against serious diseases caused by Hib, including Hib meningitis.

Will there be any side effects from the booster?

As with previous doses, there may be some swelling and redness at the site of the injection. Your child may have a slight temperature but this responds to paracetamol liquid (eg Calpol or Disprol) and cool drinks. ***Never give aspirin to children under 16 years of age.***

Any vaccine can cause allergic reactions. These are very rare, about 1 case in 100,000 immunisations. Although they can be worrying, treatment leads to a rapid and full recovery.

There are no known serious side effects from this vaccine and it has an excellent safety record, with more than 24 million doses used in the UK already.

How do I ensure my child gets the booster?

You will be asked to bring your child to your local health centre to get the Hib booster. It is important you attend so your child has this added protection from Hib. If you want further information about Hib, please speak to your health visitor, GP or practice nurse or visit the website www.immunisation.nhs.uk

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

There are very few reasons why a child should not be immunised but you should tell your health visitor, GP or practice nurse if your child has:

- a high fever;
- had a bad reaction to previous Hib vaccines.

Stay alert for meningitis and septicaemia

This Hib vaccine only protects against one form of meningitis. There are other types, such as meningitis B, for which there are no vaccines so it is important to still watch out for any signs and symptoms. The same infections that cause meningitis may also cause blood poisoning (septicaemia).

A baby with meningitis or septicaemia can become seriously ill within hours. It is therefore important to recognise the early symptoms of meningitis and/or septicaemia such as fever, being irritable and restless, vomiting and refusing feeds, which may be similar to colds or flu.

In babies, look out for one or more of these symptoms:

- refusing food;
- a high-pitched, moaning cry;
- being difficult to wake;
- pale or blotchy skin;
- red or purple spots/marks that do not fade under pressure (*see photo of glass test*).

In older children, look out for:

- stiffness in the neck;
- drowsiness or confusion;
- a severe headache;
- a dislike of bright light;
- red or purple spots/marks that do not fade under pressure (*see photo of glass test*).

If you notice one or more of these important signs contact your GP immediately or take your child to the nearest hospital accident and emergency department.



The glass test - *If a glass tumbler is pressed firmly against the spots/marks, the rash will not fade. You will be able to see the rash through the glass. If this happens contact a doctor immediately.*

Only very rarely does Hib meningitis cause the rash described above but it may lead to the other symptoms listed.

Additional information and support may be obtained from:

Meningitis Research Foundation,

71 Botanic Avenue, Belfast BT7 1JL.

Tel: 028 9032 1283;

24-hour helpline, freefone: 080 8800 3344.

www.meningitis.org

The Meningitis Trust,

Northern Ireland office,

PO Box 549, Belfast BT5 7YN.

Tel: Lo-call 0845 1200 663;

24-hour nurse-led helpline: 0845 6000 800.

E-mail: ni@meningitis-trust.org

www.meningitis-trust.org.uk

You may also find it helpful to visit the following websites:

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/publichealth

www.immunisation.nhs.uk



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