

# What to expect after immunisation: Babies and children up to 5 years

This sheet tells you about the common side effects that could happen in babies and young children up to 5 years of age after immunisation. Only use this information as a guide. Call your GP or NHS 24 on **111** immediately if, at any time, your child has a temperature of 39°C or above. If your child is having a fit, phone **999** for an ambulance. If you think your child might be seriously ill, trust your instincts and seek urgent medical advice.

## Common side effects

As with all medicines, there may be side effects after immunisation, but they're usually mild.

Your child might get a little redness, swelling or tenderness where the injection was given. This will disappear on its own. Putting a clean, cold cloth over the area for 5 to 10 minutes will be soothing.

Some children can have a fever, be a bit irritable or feel unwell – see 'How to treat a fever' in the box opposite.

Babies can be upset for up to a couple of days after having their immunisations, being more restless or sleepier than usual – this is normal. To help comfort your baby, you can:

- give them a cuddle
- offer extra drinks (if you're breastfeeding, your child may feed more often)
- take them for a walk in the fresh air.

**Remember, never give medicines that contain aspirin to children under 16 years old. See separate advice over the page about using paracetamol after the MenB vaccine at 8 and 16 weeks.**

## How to treat a fever

A fever is a body temperature over 37.5°C.

Fevers are quite common in young children, but are usually mild.

If your child's face feels hot to the touch and looks red or flushed, they may have a fever. You can check the temperature by using a thermometer. Make sure you follow the instructions for its use carefully.

When looking after a feverish child at home:

- offer your child regular fluids (where a baby or child is breastfed the most appropriate fluid is breast milk)
- check on your child during the night
- keep your child away from nursery or school
- look out for signs of dehydration (for more information visit: [www.nhsinform.scot/dehydration](http://www.nhsinform.scot/dehydration)).

There's no evidence that putting your child in a bath, sponging them down or putting a fan on will lower their fever.

Fevers are usually mild, so you only need to give a dose of infant paracetamol if your child is not comfortable or is unwell. Read the instructions on the product packaging and patient information leaflet very carefully.

## Paracetamol after meningitis B (MenB) immunisation

Children can get a fever after any immunisation, but especially when the MenB vaccine is given with the other routine vaccines at 8 and 16 weeks. You should give your baby a total of three doses of infant paracetamol around the time of each of the first two MenB vaccines, to help stop and treat fever. You should space out the doses like this:

Age of baby	Dose 1 paracetamol	Dose 2 paracetamol	Dose 3 paracetamol
8 to 16 weeks	one 2.5 ml (60 mg) dose to be given just before or just after their immunisations*	one 2.5 ml (60 mg) dose 4–6 hours after dose 1	one 2.5 ml (60 mg) dose 4–6 hours after dose 2

\* For very premature babies (born before **32 weeks**) **currently weighing less than 4 kg**, a health professional should prescribe the paracetamol according to the baby's weight at the time of immunisation. Follow the instructions on the prescription.

The 2.5 ml/60 mg dose should be measured and given either using a syringe or with a 2.5 ml spoon (this is usually the small end of the spoon that comes in the pack).

This expert advice on using paracetamol only applies if your baby has had the MenB vaccine with the other routine vaccines at 8 and 16 weeks of age.

Fever is much less likely when the **MenB booster** is given at **12 months**. Your baby may not need paracetamol then, but if your baby gets a fever, or is restless or unwell, you can give them infant paracetamol if you want to. If your baby has a **fever at any other time**, you should follow the instructions and dose advice on the product packaging and patient information leaflet.

Paracetamol is safe in very young children, but the current advice for non-vaccine fever is that no more than two doses should be given to babies aged 2 to 3 months without speaking to a GP or pharmacist. This is to make sure that fever, which may be caused by a serious infection in babies of this age, is quickly diagnosed and treated.

[www.nhsinform.scot/immunisation](http://www.nhsinform.scot/immunisation)

Please contact **0131 314 5300** or email [phs.otherformats@phs.scot](mailto:phs.otherformats@phs.scot) for information on other languages and formats.

## After immunisation with the rotavirus vaccine

Because the rotavirus vaccine is given by mouth (orally) at 8 and 12 weeks, it's possible the live virus in the vaccine will pass through your baby's gut and might be picked up by whoever changes their nappy. It's important to wash hands and keep surfaces clean after changing the baby's nappy.

Some babies may have mild diarrhoea. In very rare cases, it can affect the baby's lower gut. They may have tummy pain, be sick and pass what looks like redcurrant jelly in their nappies. Call your GP or **NHS 24** free on **111** straight away if this happens.

## After immunisation with the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine

You may see some side effects of the MMR vaccine, given at between 12 and 13 months, and at 3 years and 4 months.

- Six to 10 days after the immunisation, as the measles part of the vaccine starts to work, a small number of children may have a fever, with some developing a rash, generally feeling unwell and going off their food. The rash should only last for around 2–3 days and is not infectious.
- A very small number of immunised children may have a fit caused by the fever called a 'febrile convulsion' or 'febrile seizure'. If your child is having a fit, phone **999** for an ambulance.
- Rarely, children may get mumps-like symptoms (fever and swollen glands) about 2–3 weeks after their immunisation, as the mumps part of the vaccine starts to work. The swelling should only last around 2–3 days.
- Most commonly, children may get a brief rash and possibly a slightly raised temperature around two weeks after the immunisation from the rubella part of the vaccine. On rare occasions, a rash may also appear up to 6 weeks later.

## More information

If you're still concerned about your baby's reaction to any immunisation, speak to your GP, call **NHS 24** free on **111** or go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital. More information about the vaccines can be found in **Protect your child against serious diseases**, which can be found at: [www.publichealthscotland.scot/childhoodimmunisationsleaflet](http://www.publichealthscotland.scot/childhoodimmunisationsleaflet)