

Newborn Immunizations

From the calming safety of your arms, your baby will begin life feeling secure and protected. As a new parent, you will do all you can to continue to protect your newborn as she grows and develops. One of the best ways to protect her, now and throughout her life, is to make sure she gets the recommended immunizations.

Many serious and preventable diseases are actually caused by tiny viruses and bacteria that you can't even see. These germs are all around us and get passed to your baby in several different ways, including through the air and through touch. If a virus enters your baby's body, it can attack and infect your baby. This infection can cause an illness, it may be mild, but it could be very serious, even life-threatening.

Your baby is especially at risk because her immune system has not had a chance to develop, and her body doesn't know how to fight the infection. But as a parent, you can give her a weapon against these germs. Get her vaccinated.

A vaccine contains a weakened or dead part of the germ that causes the infection. It is too weak to make your baby sick. But in response to the vaccine, your baby's body will make antibodies to fight against the germs. Each vaccine he gets teaches his body how to fight that virus or bacteria. When he comes into contact with those germs again, his body already knows how to fight them and can prevent the infection.

Some diseases can be prevented with a single vaccine, while others require more than one vaccine for your baby to be fully protected. Your baby will need a series of vaccines over the first several years of life. These booster vaccines continue to provide your baby with long lasting immunity so your baby can be fully protected. Talk to your baby's pediatrician about what vaccines your baby needs and when to get them.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all newborns receive the Hepatitis B vaccine within the first 24 hours after birth. Other immunizations will be given at your baby's check-up at two months, again at four months, then at six months. For a complete list of the recommended immunization schedule and what diseases the immunizations will protect against, go to www.cdc.gov.

Most vaccines are given by injection, other than the Rotavirus vaccine, which is an oral vaccine given at 2 months, 4 months, and 6 months.

Sometimes more than one vaccine is given in the same injection. And sometimes your baby will get more than one shot at his healthcare appointment. As a parent this may make you nervous. If you have any questions about the vaccine schedule and its safety, talk to your baby's pediatrician. She will take the time to answer any of your questions and put your mind at ease.

Vaccines are safe but as with any medication, there may be a small risk of side effects. Keep an extra eye on your baby for a few days after he's been given a vaccine. If you notice anything that concerns you, call your baby's pediatrician.

And finally, it's not surprising, but most babies will cry when they get a vaccine. Hold your baby and comfort him. You may get upset seeing your baby cry but remember, it is very important to get all of your child's immunizations on time. They protect your baby and your community from many serious diseases; some that can be life-threatening, especially for a newborn. Follow your pediatrician's recommendations for immunizations and keep a record of them.

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When you get your baby vaccinated, you can feel confident that you are fulfilling your role as a parent to the best of your ability. You are giving your baby lasting protection from many preventable and serious diseases now and for a lifetime.