

# Immunisations at secondary school

## Your questions answered

about the HPV and Td/IPV vaccinations  
given between 12 and 18 years of age  
(school years 8 to 13)





# Introduction

This guide is for young people aged 12 to 18, and their parents or guardians. It explains:

- the immunisations that are given to young people, including the HPV vaccine for girls, usually when they are still at school
- why these immunisations are needed, and
- what side effects they might have.

The guide also answers some of the most common questions about these immunisations. In particular, it describes the HPV vaccine for girls that protects against cervical cancer and the Td/IPV vaccine that boosts the protection you got as a child against tetanus (T), diphtheria (d) and polio (IPV – inactivated polio vaccine).

If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor, school nurse or the nurse at your doctor's surgery.

Details of other sources of information are given on page 17 of this booklet.

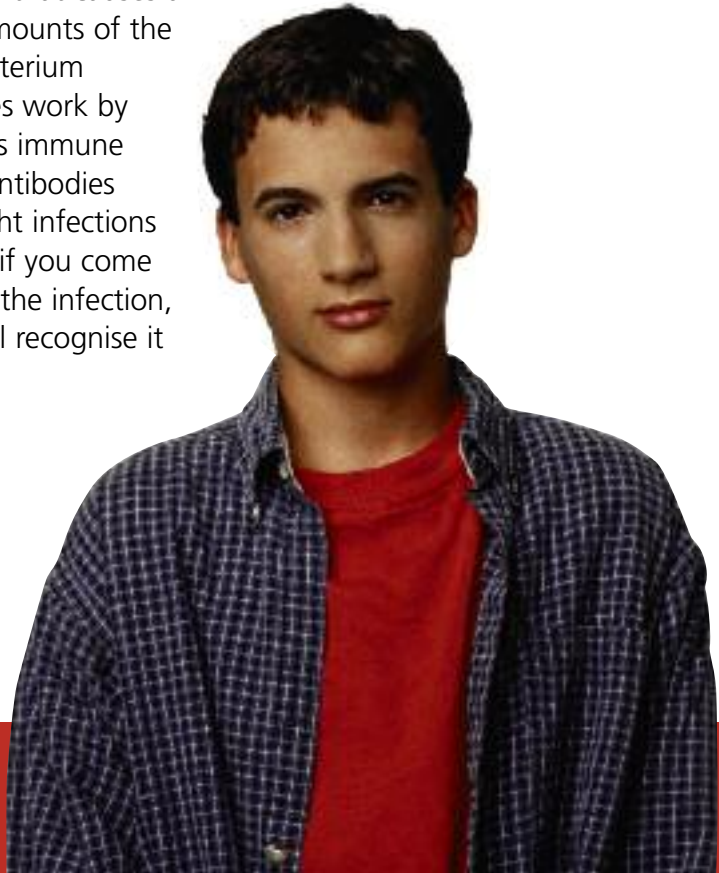
# Your questions answered

## Why do we need immunisation?

The national immunisation programme has meant that dangerous diseases, such as polio, have disappeared in the UK. But these diseases could come back – they are still around in many countries throughout the world. That's why it's so important for you to protect yourself. In the UK, diseases are kept at bay by the high immunisation rates.

## How do vaccines work?

A vaccine contains a small part of the bacterium or virus that causes a disease, or tiny amounts of the chemicals the bacterium produces. Vaccines work by causing the body's immune system to make antibodies (substances to fight infections and diseases). So if you come into contact with the infection, the antibodies will recognise it and protect you.



# Tetanus, diphtheria and polio

## What is tetanus?

Tetanus is a painful disease affecting the nervous system which can lead to muscle spasms, cause breathing problems and can kill. It is caused when germs found in the soil and manure get into the body through open cuts or burns. Tetanus cannot be passed from person to person.

## What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease that usually begins with a sore throat and can quickly cause breathing problems. It can damage the heart and nervous system, and in severe cases, it can kill.

## What is polio?

Polio is a virus that attacks the nervous system which can cause permanent paralysis of muscles. If it affects the chest muscles or the brain, polio can kill.

## If I was immunised against tetanus, diphtheria and polio as a child, am I still protected?

You may still have some protection, but you need this booster to complete your routine immunisations and give you longer-term protection.

## How many boosters do I need to have?

You need a total of five doses of tetanus, diphtheria and polio vaccines to build up and keep your immunity. You should have had:

- the first three doses as a baby
- the fourth dose when you were between three and five years old, before you started school, and
- the fifth dose is due now.

If you think you have missed any of your doses, talk to the school nurse or your doctor.

## Will I need more boosters in the future?

You will probably not need further boosters of these vaccines. However, you may need extra doses of some vaccines if you are visiting certain countries. Check with the nurse at your surgery.

## How will I be given the Td/IPV booster?

You will have an injection in your upper arm. Nobody likes injections, but it is very quick. The needles used are small and you should feel only a tiny pinprick. If you are a bit nervous about having the injection, tell the nurse or doctor before you have it.

## Are there any reasons why I should not be immunised?

There are very few teenagers who cannot have the Td/IPV vaccine.

You should **not** have the vaccine if you have had:

- a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to a previous vaccine, or
- a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to neomycin, streptomycin or polymyxin B (antibiotics that may be added to vaccines in very tiny amounts).

There are no other medical reasons why these vaccines should not be given. If you are worried, talk to the nurse or doctor.



## What if I am ill on the day of the appointment?

If you have a minor illness without a fever, such as a cold, you should have the immunisation. If you are ill with a fever, put the immunisation off until you have recovered. This is to avoid the fever being associated with the vaccine and the vaccine increasing the fever you already have. If you have:

- had a bleeding disorder, or
- had convulsions (fits) **not** associated with fever

Speak to your doctor or nurse before having the immunisation.

## Are there any side effects?

It is common to get some swelling, redness or tenderness where you have the injection. Sometimes a small painless lump develops, but this usually disappears in a few weeks. More serious effects are rare but include fever, headache, dizziness, feeling sick and swollen glands.

If you feel unwell after the immunisation, take paracetamol or ibuprofen. Read the instructions on the bottle carefully and take the correct dose for your age. If necessary, take a second dose four to six hours later. If your temperature is still high after the second dose, speak to your GP or call **NHS Direct** on **0845 46 47**.

It is not recommended that these medicines are given before or after vaccination in anticipation of a fever.

**Remember, if you are under 16 you should not take medicines that contain aspirin.**

### **Does this vaccine contain thiomersal?**

No. This booster vaccine does not contain thiomersal. Thiomersal is a mercury-based preservative. For more information about thiomersal, see [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations).

### **Are these the only immunisations I need to have now?**

When you are having your Td/IPV booster, it's a good idea to check with the nurse or doctor that all your other immunisations are up to date (for example, MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), MenC and, for some people, hepatitis B).

It's particularly important to check that your MMR immunisation is up to date because some teenagers have not had two doses of MMR.

If you have never had the MMR vaccine, you should have one dose now and another one month later. You may experience side effects from the MMR vaccine for up to six weeks after the immunisation. The symptoms are similar to those caused by the diseases, but much milder. Speak to your school nurse or doctor if you are at all concerned.

You should also talk to your doctor or school nurse if you are 'immunosuppressed' because you are having treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer, or you have a condition that affects your immune system, such as severe primary immunodeficiency. The doctor or nurse will get specialist advice on using live vaccines.

# Knowing about meningitis and septicaemia

Meningitis is infection of the lining of the brain. The same germs that cause meningitis can cause septicaemia (blood poisoning). Meningitis and septicaemia are both very serious – they can cause permanent disability and death and the signs can come on quickly – so you must get treatment straight away. If you haven't been immunised against meningococcal group C, you should have this done now. This vaccine only protects against one type of meningitis and septicaemia, so you still need to know the signs and symptoms.

## What do I look for?

Early symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia are mild and similar to those you get with flu (such as feeling hot, being sick, and pain in the back or joints). However, for **meningitis**, the most important signs to look out for are:

- a stiff neck
- a very bad headache (this alone is not a reason to get medical help)
- lights hurting your eyes
- vomiting
- a fever
- drowsy, less responsive, confused, and
- red or purple spots that don't fade under pressure (do the glass test explained on the next page).

For **septicaemia**, the most important signs to look out for are:

- sleepiness, less responsive or confused (a late sign in septicaemia)
- severe pains and aches in the arms, legs and joints
- very cold hands and feet
- shivering
- rapid breathing
- red or purple spots that don't fade under pressure (**do the glass test** explained below)
- vomiting
- a fever, and
- diarrhoea and stomach cramps.

### What should I do?

If you get one or more of the symptoms above, get help urgently. If you get treatment for meningitis and septicaemia quickly, you stand the best chance of making a full recovery. If you can't get in touch with your doctor, or are still worried after getting advice, trust your own instincts and go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital or ask a friend to take you.

### The 'glass test'

Press the side of a clear drinking glass firmly against the rash so you can see if the rash fades and loses colour under pressure. If it doesn't change colour, contact your doctor immediately.



# Cervical cancer

## What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer develops in the cervix (the entrance to the womb). It is caused by a virus called the human papillomavirus or HPV.

Cervical cancer can be very serious. After breast cancer, it is the most common women's cancer in the world. In the UK, around 3000 cases of it are diagnosed every year and about 1000 women die from it.

For more information, visit [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)

## What is HPV and how does it spread?

The human papillomavirus is very common and you catch it through intimate sexual contact with another person who already has it. Because it is so common, most people will get infected at some point in their lifetime. In most women the virus does not cause cervical cancer. But having the vaccine is important because we do not know who is at risk.

## What is the HPV (cervical cancer) vaccine?

There are many types of human papillomavirus. The HPV vaccine protects against the two types that cause most cases (over 70%) of cervical cancer.

Because the vaccine does not protect you against all of the other types, you will still need to have smear tests (cervical screening that picks up early signs of changes in the cervix) when you are older.

Most girls who have the vaccination will reduce their risk of getting cervical cancer by 70%.



## How will I have the vaccination?

You will need three injections over about six months to get the best protection. It's important that you have all three doses. The nurse will give you the vaccination in your upper arm.

Your school or local NHS will contact you when it is time for your vaccination.

Remember, the HPV vaccine is recommended for all girls in school year 8 (aged 12 to 13), and all girls born on or after 1 September 1990 in a catch-up programme.

Having the vaccine won't protect you against any other sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and it won't stop you getting pregnant.

## Are there any side effects?

Like most injections, the side effects of the HPV vaccination are quite mild. Stinging and soreness in the arm are common but wear off in a couple of days. More serious side effects are extremely rare and the nurses know how to deal with them. The vaccine meets the rigorous safety standards required for it to be used in the UK and other European countries. See [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations) if you'd like more information on side effects.

Millions of doses of vaccine have already been given to girls in the UK.

## **What about giving consent?**

You will probably want to share information about the vaccine with your parents and discuss it together. If you are being offered the vaccination at school, you may be given a consent form that your parent/guardian should sign giving permission for you to have the vaccination.

The doctor or nurse will discuss the HPV vaccine with you at your appointment and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

## **Other frequently asked questions about the HPV vaccination**

### **I've heard you get a sore, swollen arm for a long time after the vaccination. Is that true?**

The soreness and swelling you may get in your arm can last for a few hours, to a couple of days.

### **I missed my vaccination, can I still have it?**

Yes. If you missed any of your vaccinations, for whatever reason, you should speak to your nurse or doctor about making another appointment. It's best to make your appointment as soon as possible after your original one. The most important thing is to have all three doses – it's never too late to catch up.

### **Now I've had the injections, will I still need to go for smear tests?**

Yes. All women should go for smear tests (cervical screening) as soon as they are old enough (25 and over in England). The vaccine protects against 70% of the human papillomavirus types that cause cervical cancer, so you still have to be screened to try to pick up cervical abnormalities caused by other HPV types that could lead to cancer.

### **Should girls who have already had sex bother with the vaccination?**

Definitely. If you've had sex, and are in the relevant age group, you should still have the vaccine.

### **I missed my appointment, what should I do?**

Speak to your nurse to arrange another one. It is important that you have all three doses to get the best protection.

Please don't forget that smear tests (cervical screening) will continue to be essential whether you have had the HPV vaccination or not.

## Where can I get more information?

For general information about teenage vaccinations, visit the website at [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations) or call **NHS Direct** on **0845 46 47** (Calls cost a maximum of 5 pence per minute from a BT landline. Mobiles and other networks may vary. You may be charged a minimum cost per call.)

### For information on meningitis

The Meningitis Research Foundation, the Meningitis Trust and Meningitis UK all provide information on meningitis.

Phone the Meningitis Research Foundation's free 24-hour helpline on **080 8800 3344** or visit the website at [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org)

Phone the Meningitis Trust's 24-hour helpline on **0800 028 18 28** or visit the website at [www.meningitis-trust.org](http://www.meningitis-trust.org)

Meningitis UK is searching for a vaccine to eradicate meningitis. Phone **01173 73 73 73** or visit [www.meningitisuk.org](http://www.meningitisuk.org) for more information.

### For information on cervical cancer

Visit [www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations) where you can download a question-and-answer sheet that gives more detailed information on the topics covered in this leaflet.

For more information about cervical screening visit [www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk](http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk)



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**[www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)**



## Routine childhood immunisation programme

Each vaccination is given as a single injection into the muscle of the thigh or upper arm.

At what age to immunise	Diseases protected against	Vaccine given
<b>Two months old</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib) Pneumococcal disease	DTaP/IPV/Hib and Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)
<b>Three months old</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib Meningococcal group C disease (MenC)	DTaP/IPV/Hib and MenC
<b>Four months old</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib MenC Pneumococcal disease	DTaP/IPV/Hib and MenC and PCV
<b>Between 12 and 13 months old – within a month of the first birthday</b>	Hib MenC Pneumococcal disease Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)	Hib/MenC, PCV and MMR
<b>Three years and four months or soon after</b>	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio Measles, mumps and rubella	DTaP/IPV or dTaP/IPV and MMR
<b>Girls aged 12 to 13 years</b>	Cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus types 16 and 18	HPV
<b>13 to 18 years old</b>	Tetanus, diphtheria and polio	Td/IPV

