Somewhere around your child’s fourth birthday, they will receive their fifth vaccination against diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus and polio (DPTP). By providing this booster shot, the National Immunisation Programme ensures excellent, long-term protection against these infectious diseases. Parents are sent a notice to visit the Well-Baby Clinic for the vaccination.

Why are vaccinations so important?

Vaccinations help your body build immunity against pathogenic viruses and bacteria. That will protect your child from becoming seriously ill and developing complications. When many children are vaccinated, infectious diseases have fewer opportunities to spread.

Nearly 95% of all children in the Netherlands have been vaccinated. That is why some dangerous infectious diseases hardly occur here anymore. It also ensures that the children who have not been vaccinated are less at risk to catch infectious diseases.

Are vaccinations safe?

As a parent, it is understandable to want to make sure that the vaccine is safe for your child. Before a vaccine is approved for use, it is tested extensively, just like any medicine. Vaccines are not allowed to be given to children until it is absolutely clear that the vaccine works and is safe.

Vaccine safety is also closely monitored while they are used – not just in the Netherlands, but all across the world.

Is this booster shot really necessary?

Your child has already had four DPTP vaccinations. Over time, your child’s protection against these diseases will diminish. That is why this booster vaccination is necessary.

What diseases does the vaccination protect your child from?

The DPTP vaccination protects your child against diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus and polio.
**Diphtheria**  
Diphtheria is a serious throat infection. If people are not vaccinated against it, the disease will become a problem again. Children suffering from diphtheria run the risk of suffocating. Diphtheria has been almost completely eradicated in the Netherlands.

**Whooping cough**  
Whooping cough (pertussis) causes violent coughing fits that can persist for months. Whooping cough can lead to exhaustion and brain damage. You could even die as a result. Vaccinated children are less likely to become seriously ill from the disease. Vaccination against whooping cough is effective in reducing the risk, but it does not completely eliminate the possibility of infection, and does not provide lifelong protection. That is why whooping cough still occurs in the Netherlands.

**Tetanus**  
Tetanus leads to violent muscle spasms. Without treatment, tetanus is fatal. Tetanus is not contagious. That means that you cannot catch it from another person. A child can get tetanus if they have been bitten by a pet or other animal, or if street refuse gets into an open wound.

**Polio**  
Polio can cause permanent paralysis of the legs, arms and/or respiratory muscles.

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**Vaccine and information leaflet**  
Would you like to know what is in the DPTP vaccine? All ingredient lists and information leaflets for the various vaccines are available on the website of the National Immunisation Programme. For more information, please visit rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/bijsluiters

**My child is afraid of the shot**  
Some 4-year-old children think getting shots is frightening and unpleasant. We cannot change the way they feel about that. However, the doctor or nurse at the Well-Baby Clinic does have tips to help your child relax. The actual injection only takes a moment.

**Side-effects of vaccinations**  
After receiving the DPTP vaccine, your child may experience some discomfort from the injection, but that is not always the case. That phenomenon is called side-effects. These side-effects are generally mild and will go away on their own.

Most of the side-effects start on the day that the vaccination is administered. The spot where the child gets the shot may become a little red or puffy. Your child might also become listless or develop a mild fever.
Tips in case of side-effects

- In case of fever, make sure that your child drinks enough fluids
- If a child is in pain or has a fever, paracetamol might help. Check the information leaflet to see how much your child is allowed to have
- Avoid touching the arm or leg where the vaccination was administered if possible. It might be sensitive

If you are concerned because your child is very sick, or if your child is still listless or feverish after a few days, you can call your family doctor for advice.

Reporting a side-effect

Is your child experiencing a side-effect? You can report it to the doctor or nurse who gave your child the vaccination. They will report the side-effect to the Lareb Pharmacovigilance Centre. You can also personally report the side-effect to Lareb (www.lareb.nl). Lareb investigates all side-effects.

My child is ill. Can my child be vaccinated as scheduled?

Have you received an invitation, but your child is ill? Please consult the doctor or nurse at the Well-Baby Clinic. Sometimes it is advisable to postpone the vaccination for a little while.

Information about the vaccination

RIVM, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, gives parents information about the vaccinations. When your child is 9 years old, you will receive a new invitation for the next vaccination. When girls are 12 or 13 years old, they will also receive an invitation for the vaccinations to prevent cervical cancer. All vaccinations from the National Immunisation Programme are voluntary and free of charge.

The vaccinations are documented in three places: in the records maintained by the youth healthcare services, on the child’s vaccination certificate, and in the national records maintained by RIVM. RIVM uses that information for ongoing quality assessment of the immunisation programme, to send reminders, to provide copies of the vaccination certificates, and to assess the percentage of vaccinated children in the Netherlands. If there is an outbreak of an infectious disease, it is very important to know how many children are protected, so that it becomes clear whether there is a chance that it will get spread and whether government intervention is needed.
Which vaccines will my child receive?

6-9 weeks
- DTaP-IPV-Hib-HBV
- PCV

3 months
- DTaP-IPV-Hib-HBV
- PCV

4 months
- DTaP-IPV-Hib-HBV
- PCV

11 months
- DTaP-IPV-Hib-HBV
- PCV

14 months
- MMR
- MenACWY

4 years
- DTaP-IPV

9 years
- DTP
- MMR

12/13 years* (Injection 2 half year later)
- HPV

Meaning of the abbreviations
- D: Diphtheria
- aP: Pertussis (whooping cough)
- T: Tetanus
- IPV: Poliomyelitis
- Hib: Haemophilus influenzae type b
- HBV: Hepatitis B
- PCV: Pneumococcal disease
- M: Mumps
- M: Measles
- R: Rubella
- MenACWY: Meningococcal ACWY disease
- HPV: Human papillomavirus

* Only for girls
Would you like to know more?
The National Immunisation Programme website provides more information about various infectious diseases, vaccinations and side-effects. You can also read about how research on side-effects takes place and what happens when you take your child to one of the Well-Baby Clinics.

Website: rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/english/

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