Vaccinations for children at age 4
National Immunisation Programme
Protect your child against serious infectious diseases

At the age of 4 years your child will receive another vaccination against diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus and polio (DTaP-IPV). This booster shot will protect your child from catching these diseases and developing complications, and prevent your child from infecting others. That is also very important for children who have not been vaccinated (yet), for example because they are too young, or cannot be vaccinated due to illness.

An obvious choice

Nearly all children in the Netherlands are vaccinated against serious infectious diseases, so these diseases almost never occur here anymore. Still, it is important to vaccinate, since the diseases will come back if we stop vaccinating.
Nicole (41) sees vaccination as a healthy and logical choice

Even before her daughter Eva (4) was born, it was clear: just like her older brother and sister, Eva would receive all her vaccinations as scheduled. According to Nicole and her husband Bart, the immunisation shots are part of safe, healthy parenting. One of her parents’ cousins had polio, so Nicole is well aware of how important vaccination is. She believes that it is good for her own family, and for children in other families. Nicole is sure that vaccination is a healthy and logical choice.

Read the story of Nicole and her daughter Eva at rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/nicole

A healthy start in life

We consider it important for children to have a healthy start in life – as infants and toddlers, and as they grow older. That is why countries worldwide offer vaccinations to children. Each country has its own vaccination schedule. These schedules are very similar.

Safe and reliable

Before a vaccine is approved for use, it is tested extensively, just like any other medicine. Vaccines are not allowed to be used until it is absolutely clear that the vaccine works and is safe. Medicines for children are subjected to even stricter safety checks. Vaccine safety is also closely monitored while
they are used – not just in the Netherlands, but all across the world.

## Tips in case of side-effects

Vaccinations can have side-effects, because they activate the body’s immune response. These side-effects are generally mild and will disappear spontaneously. The most common side-effect is a mild fever after the vaccination. The injection site may become a little red or swollen. If a child is in pain or seems to be feeling unwell, paracetamol might help. Serious side-effects are very rare. Are you concerned because your child is very sick, or still listless or feverish after a few days? Please contact your family doctor.

## Reporting a side-effect

You can report a side-effect of a vaccination to the doctor or nurse who administered the vaccination. They will pass on the report of the side-effect to the Lareb Pharmacovigilance Centre. You can also report the side-effect to Lareb yourself. Side-effects can also be reported via the website at rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/english.

## Are these injections still necessary?

Some infectious diseases require multiple vaccinations to achieve effective protection against the disease. In some cases, that is because a vaccine is less effective after several years have passed. It takes several booster shots to make sure that your child is effectively protected against diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), tetanus and polio.

## Vaccine and information leaflet

Do you want to know about the composition of the vaccines that your child will receive? The information leaflets for the various vaccines are available on the website of the National Immunisation Programme at rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/bijsluiters.

## My child is ill

If your child is ill or on medication, please consult the physician or nurse at the Well-Baby Clinic. Sometimes it is advisable to postpone the vaccination for a little while.
Diphtheria
Diphtheria is a serious throat infection. Children who have diphtheria run the risk of suffocating.

Whooping cough
Whooping cough (pertussis) causes violent coughing fits that can persist for months. Whooping cough can lead to exhaustion and brain damage, or even death. 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 it cannot spread from person to person. A child can get tetanus after a bite from a pet or other animal, or if dirt from the street gets into an open wound.

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

Talking to youth healthcare services
The National Immunisation Programme website at rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/english provides much more information about various infectious diseases, vaccinations and side-effects. Unfortunately, people also find lots of incorrect information online. If you have questions about vaccinations and diseases, you can always contact the physician or nurse at your Well-Baby Clinic, the local Centre for Youth and Families, or the Municipal Public Health Services (GGD) in your region.
Which vaccines will my child receive?

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

5 months
- DTaP-IPV-Hib-HBV
- PCV

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

14 months
- MMR
- MenACWY

12/13 years* (Vaccination 2: half a year later)
- HPV
- HPV

14 years
- MenACWY

Extra DTaP-IPV-Hib-HBV vaccination at the age of 2 months
A child receives an extra vaccination at the age of 2 months if the mother was not vaccinated against whooping cough (pertussis) during pregnancy, and in case of special circumstances. The doctor or nurse at your well baby clinic will discuss this with you.

Abbreviations and what they mean
- D: Diphtheria
- T: Tetanus
- aP: Pertussis (whooping cough)
- IPV: Poliomyelitis
- Hib: Haemophilus influenzae type b
- HBV: Hepatitis B
- PCV: Pneumococcal disease
- M: Mumps
- MMR: Measles
- Meningococcal ACWY
- HPV: Human papillomavirus
- MenACWY: Meningococcal ACWY
- * Only for girls
My child is afraid of the shots

Injections can seem scary and unpleasant to some 4-year-old children. There is nothing we can do about that. The doctor or nurse will help you to relax your child.

The actual injection only takes a moment. Your child’s arm may sometimes be stiff or painful after the vaccination. This will disappear spontaneously. If a child is in pain or seems to be feeling unwell, paracetamol might help.

Information about the vaccination

RIVM, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, gives parents information about the vaccinations. Starting with the invitation that pregnant women receive for the 22-week vaccination. Shortly after the birth of their child, parents receive a set of vaccination cards for all inoculations until the child is 14 months old. When a child is 4 years old, and again at 9 years old, the parents receive a new invitation for the next vaccination. When girls are 13 years old, they will also receive an invitation for the vaccinations to prevent cervical cancer. When boys and girls are 14 years old, they receive an invitation for the vaccination to prevent meningococcal disease.

The vaccinations are recorded 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 this information for ongoing quality assessment of the immunisation programme as well as the vaccines, 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 which children are protected, to check if there is a chance that the disease will spread and whether special government intervention is needed.
Vaccinations outside the National Immunisation Programme

There are also vaccines available that are not included in the National Immunisation Programme. You or your child can also receive these vaccinations. However, since they are not part of the programme, you will have to pay for them yourself. If you would like to get these vaccinations, you can contact your family doctor or a vaccination centre. You cannot get these vaccines at the Well-Baby Clinic. Go to rivm.nl/vaccinaties to read more about the vaccines available in the Netherlands. Are you planning a trip abroad with your child? Check with the travel clinic or GGD vaccination office if any additional vaccinations are necessary.