



Vaccinations for your child

National Immunisation Programme

Protect your child with vaccinations

For nearly 70 years, children in the Netherlands have been vaccinated against serious infectious diseases. These diseases have almost completely disappeared here as a result. It is still important to vaccinate, since the diseases will come back if we stop vaccinating.

How does it work?

Vaccination helps your child's body build resistance (immunity) to viruses and bacteria that make people ill. As a result, your child will not become ill, or only have very mild symptoms. Your child is also much less likely to infect others. That is very important for children who have not been vaccinated yet, for example because they are too young, or cannot be vaccinated due to illness.

Children usually receive two injections per visit. The injections are given in the thigh or upper arm.

Extensively tested

Before a vaccine can be used, it has been extensively tested – just like any other medicine. A vaccine can only be given to children once it is clear that it is safe and effective. Vaccine safety continues to be monitored while vaccines are being used. This happens in the Netherlands, and all over the world.

Vaccine information leaflets

Would you like to know exactly what is in the vaccines given to your child? The information leaflets for each vaccine are on the website of the National Immunisation Programme. Go to rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/en/brochures-national-immunisation-programme.

Which diseases are covered?

In the Netherlands, children are vaccinated against 13 serious infectious diseases. These are the diseases covered by childhood vaccinations.

Mumps

Mumps is an infection that affects the parotid glands behind the jaw. That is why children with mumps have swelling in their cheeks and neck. It sometimes leads to meningitis. Boys can sometimes become less fertile after having mumps. This could make it more difficult for them to have children later in life.

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is a serious throat infection. It is very contagious. Before the vaccination was introduced, many children died of diphtheria.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is an inflammation of the liver. Sometimes the virus stays in your body. That can lead to liver cancer.

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August 2025

Hib disease

Hib bacteria can cause serious infections. That includes blood poisoning, meningitis, epiglottitis, pneumonia or inflammatory arthritis.

HPV

HPV is short for human papillomavirus. The virus can cause various forms of cancer in men and women. That includes cancer of the mouth, throat, penis, anus and cervix. Eight in ten people are infected with HPV at least once in their lives.

Whooping cough (pertussis)

Whooping cough causes violent coughing fits that can persist for months. This is specifically dangerous for babies. They can become exhausted and suffer brain damage. They can even die as a result.

Measles

Measles is a rash disease involving high fever and an itchy, painful rash. It often leads to ear infection. Sometimes children develop pneumonia or meningitis. They could die from this. Measles is highly contagious.

Meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease can cause meningitis and blood poisoning. You could also die as a result. The vaccination provided in the National Immunisation Programme protects against four different types of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, W and Y. The vaccination does not protect against meningococcal disease type B.

Pneumococcal disease

Pneumococci are bacteria which can cause blood poisoning, serious pneumonia and meningitis. Children can also lose their hearing. The vaccine is effective against the most common types of pneumococci.

Polio

Polio is also known as infantile paralysis. It can lead to permanent paralysis of the legs, arms and/or respiratory muscles.

Rubella

Rubella is a rash disease, but much less serious than measles. During pregnancy, rubella is dangerous to the unborn baby. A baby exposed to rubella before birth could be born with serious defects. Children are vaccinated against rubella to prevent them from infecting pregnant women.

RSV

RSV can cause respiratory infection. Young babies are especially at risk for becoming seriously ill. They could have shortness of breath or develop pneumonia.

Rotavirus

Rotavirus can cause gastrointestinal infections. It is easy to catch, and very common in young children. Children develop fever, diarrhoea (often severe) and vomiting.

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 dirt from the street gets into an open wound.

Side effects

Side effects may occur after vaccination. This is usually because vaccinations activate the body's immune response. These side effects are generally mild and go away on their own.

The most common side effect is a mild fever (a temperature of about 38 degrees) shortly after the vaccination. The injection site may also be a bit red or swollen. After the rotavirus vaccination, your child may have diarrhoea or vomiting.

Serious side effects are very rare. Contact your GP if you are worried, for example because your child is very ill, or still listless or feverish after a few days.

The injection against RSV hardly ever causes side effects. If your baby develops a fever after the injection, contact the GP.

A few tips to soothe the pain:

In case of fever, diarrhoea or vomiting, make sure that your child drinks enough fluids.

- Very young infants may be comforted by cuddles and distractions.
- If a child is in pain or seems to be feeling poorly, 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 given if possible. Touching the area can make the pain worse.

Reporting a side effect

You can report a side effect of a vaccination to the doctor or nurse who gave the vaccination. They will pass on the report to the Lareb Pharmacovigilance Centre. You can also report the side effect directly to Lareb at www.lareb.nl.

Which vaccinations will my child receive?

See the vaccination schedule for an overview: rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/en/brochures-national-immunisation-programme#Vaccination-schedule

Good to know

Whooping cough vaccination

If the mother was not vaccinated against whooping cough during pregnancy, the baby will be offered an extra vaccination between the age of 6 and 9 weeks. This may also happen in exceptional situations. The doctor at the well-baby clinic will discuss this with you.

Rotavirus vaccination

The rotavirus vaccine is not an injection, but an oral vaccine: a liquid in a small tube. Children receive the vaccine in the form of droplets in their mouth.

Injection against RSV

Starting in autumn 2025, babies can get an injection against RSV. RSV is mainly seen in autumn and winter. The season when your baby is born determines when your baby has the injection. Babies born from October through March will get the injection within 2 weeks after being born. Babies born from April through September will get the injection in September or October.

My child is ill. What happens next?

Have you received an invitation, but your child is ill? Consult with the doctor or nurse. Sometimes it is better to postpone the vaccination. If your child is using medication, it is also good to discuss that before vaccination.

Questions?

- For more information, go to rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/en.
- If you have questions, you can always contact the doctor or nurse at your well-baby clinic, the local Centre for Youth and Families, or the Municipal Public Health Services (GGD) in your region.
- Find information about vaccinations in simple language at vaccinaties.steffie.nl. This website is available in several different languages, including Dutch and English.
- Are you hesitant about vaccination? Call 088 7 555 777 to contact the national helpline. English-speaking operators are available on Monday through Friday mornings.

Vaccinations outside the National Immunisation Programme

There are also vaccinations that are not covered by the National Immunisation Programme. This includes the vaccinations against chickenpox and meningococcal disease type B. If you would like to get these vaccinations, you can contact your GP or a vaccination centre. You will have to pay for them yourself. You cannot get these vaccinations at the well-baby clinic.

Are you planning a trip abroad with your child? Check with the travel clinic or GGD vaccination office if any additional vaccinations are necessary.

Tuberculosis

Children with an increased risk of tuberculosis are offered a vaccination. If your child is eligible for vaccination against tuberculosis, you will be contacted by the Municipal Public Health Services (GGD). Contact the GGD if you have any questions about this. The costs of this vaccination are covered by health insurance.

Information about the vaccination

When your child is vaccinated, youth healthcare services (JGZ) will record the vaccination in its system and on your vaccination certificate.

Consent

If you consent, JGZ will share your data with the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). The data to be shared is details about your vaccination and personal data. The JGZ doctor or nurse will ask you if you consent to sharing your data with RIVM. It is important that you consent to this. To be able to do its work properly, RIVM needs to know exactly which vaccinations your child received.

What will RIVM do with this data?

RIVM needs this data for various reasons, such as to send you a reminder, so that your child receives all the vaccinations in the National Immunisation Programme. You can also view and print your child's vaccination data through the portal at <https://mijn.rivm.nl>. This could be useful if you plan to travel abroad. And RIVM wants to know how many people in the Netherlands are vaccinated. This makes it possible to monitor the development of infectious diseases in the Netherlands.

For more information, visit rijksvaccinatieprogramma.nl/en/about/your-consent.

Published by:

National Institute for Public Health and the Environment
PO Box 1 | 3720 BA Bilthoven, The Netherlands
www.rivm.nl

August 2025

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