

# Immunisation and Pregnancy

## What vaccinations can I have after the baby is born?

Any vaccine can be given to women after the baby is born including measles, mumps, and rubella and chickenpox (varicella) vaccines. Speak to your doctor/immunisation provider about influenza and pertussis vaccines as these are highly recommended for both parents as soon as possible after delivery of the baby.

## Can I have vaccinations while I am breastfeeding?

Yes. There is evidence that immunisation does not affect breastfeeding.

## When will my baby be vaccinated?

You will be offered a 'birth' dose of hepatitis B vaccine for your baby before you leave hospital. This is only provided up to 7 days after delivery to prevent the risk of hepatitis B infection early in life. Evidence shows that the birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine is well tolerated in newborn infants.

The next recommended vaccines for your baby will be due when your baby is 2 months old. It is important to vaccinate on time to give your baby early protection against diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, rotavirus, hepatitis B, pneumococcal disease and haemophilus influenzae type b (HIB).

## Do vaccines have side effects?

Vaccines are like any other medicine and can have side effects. Most reactions are mild, short lasting and do not require special treatment. Your doctor/immunisation provider will explain what reactions there might be after a vaccination and what to do if you are worried.

Severe allergic reactions occur very rarely and your doctor/immunisation provider is trained to recognise and manage these rare events.

If you would like further information about possible side effects from vaccination, call the Immunisation Section, SA Health on (08) 8226 7177 or speak to your doctor/immunisation provider.

## Where can I get more information?

- > See your doctor or local immunisation provider for further information on immunisation and vaccines
- > Speak to your midwife
- > Contact the Immunisation Section, Department of Health (details below)
- > Women's and Children's Hospital website: <http://www.wch.sa.gov.au/healthinfo/index.html>

## References

The NHMRC Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Edition 2008

Website: <http://immunise.health.gov.au/>

## For more information

**Immunisation Section**  
SA Health  
PO Box 6, Rundle Mall, SA 5000

**Telephone: 08 8226 7177**  
[www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs](http://www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs)

Non-English speaking: for information in languages other than English, call the Interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call the Department of Health.

This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 8226 1990.

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## If I am planning to become pregnant is there information I need to know about immunisation?

Yes. It is advisable to speak to your doctor to check that you have protection against certain diseases. Some diseases can cause serious illness in pregnant women, the unborn child or the newborn baby. Immunisation before, during or after pregnancy can protect against such diseases.

## What diseases can I be protected from?

To help protect your baby, it is recommended that parents have protection against:

**Measles, mumps, and rubella:** Rubella infection in a pregnant woman can cause serious birth defects in the baby. Persons born after 1966 may need a booster dose of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine.

**Varicella (chickenpox):** Pregnant women and unborn babies can become seriously ill from chickenpox and birth defects can result in the baby. A simple blood test will confirm if you are protected from chickenpox. If you are not protected, speak to your doctor about receiving 2 doses of vaccine.

**Influenza:** Pregnancy increases the risk of developing serious complications from influenza.



**Pertussis (whooping cough):** Babies under 6 months of age are at risk of serious illness and even death from whooping cough. Therefore it is important for parents to be vaccinated against whooping cough. This will reduce the risk of parents contracting the disease and passing the disease onto their new baby.

**Pneumococcal:** If you smoke or have chronic heart, lung or kidney disease, or diabetes, then protection against pneumococcal disease is also recommended prior to becoming pregnant.

## If I have had the disease or was vaccinated as a child, will I still be protected?

Some diseases and vaccines, like measles and rubella, will give life long protection but others like whooping cough do not.

Protection against whooping cough lasts for approximately 5 to 10 years. After this time, you are at risk of contracting whooping cough so you may need to have a booster dose of vaccine.

## If I have had the disease or was vaccinated as a child, will my baby be protected?

Protection from some diseases is passed from you to your baby. This protection is short lasting, usually less than a year.

Your baby does not receive protection from you against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, hepatitis B or HIB (haemophilus influenzae type b) so they are at risk of catching disease until they receive their recommended vaccinations.

## What vaccinations can I receive *before* I become pregnant?

Any vaccine can be given before pregnancy, however, it is recommended to avoid becoming pregnant for 28 days after measles, mumps, and rubella and chickenpox (varicella) vaccines. Please discuss this with your doctor/immunisation provider.

## What vaccinations can I have *during* my pregnancy?

Influenza vaccination is recommended for pregnant women. As a precaution, other vaccines are not recommended during pregnancy unless you are in a situation of increased risk where the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks. Please discuss this further with your doctor/immunisation provider.