

Immunisations – Preterm babies

Parent information

All babies, particularly preterm babies, are at increased risk of serious illness and hospitalisation if they are exposed to vaccine preventable diseases. Vaccinations are given to babies and children to strengthen their immune system so they can be protected (immunised) against serious childhood diseases. We recommend that all babies receive their scheduled vaccinations on time to prevent serious illness from potential exposure to these diseases. A vaccine dose may protect against one specific disease or a combination of several diseases in the one injection. This reduces the number of injections your baby needs. All babies will be monitored closely in the neonatal unit after receiving their vaccinations.

When do preterm babies get vaccinated?

- Between 6 and 8 weeks of age from birth.
- Some babies will have this delayed if they are unwell or unstable when their vaccinations are due.
- For babies going home on oxygen, an Immunoglobulin may also be given by injection to prevent serious illness from a common winter virus called Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). This can help reduce the need for admission to hospital for these babies.
- Babies from vulnerable groups or with certain medical conditions are recommended to receive additional vaccines to offer extra protection.

How are the vaccinations given?

- Vaccinations are given in 2 ways:
 - Injections into the thigh
 - Orally via the mouth or gastric tube.

Will there be any complications?

- Pain at the injection site.
- A mild fever, irritability and lethargy.
- Babies with chronic lung disease (CLD) may experience a temporary increase in their oxygen requirement or need to start or restart oxygen for a few days.
- Babies who were born very preterm may have an increase in apnoea's (periods of not breathing) for a short time.
- Babies who have just come off breathing support (usually CPAP or High Flow) may need to recommence this for a few days.
- The oral Rotavirus vaccine can cause diarrhoea and vomiting in a very small number of babies. **Handwashing after nappy changes is very important for 14 days after this vaccination.**

Any further questions?

This fact sheet provides general information only. All details about immunisations are available in each baby's red book (Personal Health Record).

If you have any questions about your baby's care, we encourage you to speak to the nursing and medical staff.



Consumers contributed
to this information.