

Stay Strong, Get Vaccinated

Information for parents to protect their children through vaccination

We know your child's health is your top priority and so protecting them from serious disease is incredibly important. That is why the NHS offers a free childhood vaccine programme, safeguarding your child from certain illnesses.

Vaccines work by causing the body's immune system to remember the specific infection targeted in each vaccine. If your child comes into contact with an infection and they have had their vaccines, your child's body will recognise that infection and quickly respond to fight off diseases like measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough and more.

Illnesses like measles can spread very easily between children who are not vaccinated, and such infections can have a huge impact on your child's life. They can miss out on school due to time spent unwell, be hospitalised, and even experience life-long complications and disability. In some cases, these infections can tragically cause death

Recent data shows that in 2024¹, over 2,900 measles cases were confirmed in England, the highest figure in decades. As a result, the UK has lost its World Health Organization (WHO) measles elimination status. Vaccination rates also remain well below the 95% target needed to prevent outbreaks.

Health experts warn that falling vaccination rates are putting more children at risk of severe illness and long-term complications, many of which are entirely preventable through the free NHS vaccinations programme.

Vaccination remains one of the most effective public health interventions, second only to clean water. Immunisation protects millions of children from severe illness, long-term complications and death globally each year.

We understand that you may have questions about vaccine safety and effectiveness. All routine childhood vaccinations offered by the NHS have an excellent safety record.

As well as directly protecting vaccinated children, many vaccines also reduce transmission across the population, helping to protect those who are too young or too vulnerable to be vaccinated.

What's new in 2026?

For the first time, the NHS is offering free protection against chickenpox as part of the routine childhood schedule through the MMRV vaccine. This single injection protects against:

¹ [Parents urged to protect children through vaccination campaign - GOV.UK](#)

- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Varicella (chickenpox)

The second dose is now offered earlier, at 18 months, to ensure children are fully protected before starting school.

Parents: What should you do?

Check your children are up to date with their recommended vaccinations and to **book an appointment** through their GP practice when invited so they are not put at an unnecessary risk.

If you do have any questions, do not hesitate to speak to your GP or health visitor, they will be happy to discuss vaccines and guide you through the vaccination schedule. Although it is important that vaccines are given on time for the best protection, if you or your child have missed a vaccine, simply contact your GP anytime to check if you can catch up

Separately, **spread the message** within your family, friends and your wider community circles about the benefits of vaccination and **help** more children access the protection they need.

UK Health Security Agency NHS

Your child's vaccine schedule

8 weeks

- 6-in-1 vaccine*
- Rotavirus vaccine*
- MenB vaccine*

12 weeks

- 6-in-1 vaccine*
- Rotavirus vaccine*
- MenB vaccine*

16 weeks

- 6-in-1 vaccine*
- Pneumococcal vaccine*

1 year

- MMRV vaccine**
- Pneumococcal vaccine*
- MenB vaccine*

On or after 1 July 2024 for children born

Before 1 July 2024

1 year

- MMRV vaccine*
- Pneumococcal vaccine*
- MenB vaccine*
- HBV/MenC or 6-in-1 vaccine*

2+ years

- Children's flu vaccine (yearly)

3 years and 4 months

- MMRV vaccine*
- 4-in-1 pre-school booster vaccine (for children born between 1 July - 31 Dec 2025)

18 months

- MMRV vaccine**
- 6-in-1 vaccine*

2+ years

- Children's flu vaccine (yearly)

3 years and 4 months

- 4-in-1 pre-school booster vaccine
- MMRV vaccine*

*First dose. **Second dose. ***Third dose. ****Fourth dose. 6-in-1 protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib and hepatitis B. 4-in-1 protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio. First dose of rotavirus vaccine must be given before 15 weeks of age and second dose must be given before 24 weeks of age. **Vaccine given will depend on vaccine availability. ***Vaccine given will depend on child's date of birth.

Follow your child's vaccine schedule to protect them against illnesses

Stick this timeline up as a useful reminder

Are your child's vaccines up to date? Book now at their GP practice

To order more copies of this poster, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-public-health-resources> Or call 0300 123 1002

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Scan the code for more information: www.nhs.uk/vaccines001

For more information, please visit:

[NHS vaccinations and when to have them - NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)

[Why vaccination is important and the safest way to protect yourself - NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/why-vaccination)