

# Immunization : Infant Haemophilus type B (Hib) Vaccine

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

Vaccines (or needles or baby shots) are the best way to protect against some very serious infections. The Canadian Paediatric Society and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization strongly recommend routine immunization.

Infant Hib vaccine protects children from serious diseases like meningitis caused by the Haemophilus influenzae type b or Hib germ. It is recommended for use in infants and children younger than five years.

## What is Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) disease?

Even though "influenzae" is part of its name, the Hib germ does not cause influenza or the flu. Hib infections are much more serious.

Before the Hib vaccine was used, the Hib germ was a common cause of serious infections in children. Hib was the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in children two months to five years of age. Meningitis is a serious infection of the fluid and lining that covers the spinal cord. Meningitis can cause brain damage, learning and developmental problems, deafness and blindness. One out of 20 children with meningitis can die and serious disability (nerve damage, deafness) occurs in about 15 per cent.

The Hib germ also causes a serious infection of the throat near the voice box. This infection is called epiglottitis. This can make

it difficult for the child to breathe. The Hib germ can also cause infection of the lungs (pneumonia) and bone and joint infections.

Children under five years are more likely to get Hib disease. Children attending childcare centres are even more likely to catch it. The Hib germ spreads to others through coughing and sneezing.

## How well does the Hib vaccine protect my child?

The vaccine protects around 95 per cent of children who get all their needles against serious Hib infections. It will not prevent meningitis caused by other germs.

## At what age should my child be vaccinated with the Hib vaccine?

Your child should have the first needle at two months of age. Three more needles are needed - at four months, six months and 18 months of age. This vaccine is usually given to infants and children in combination with the cPDT Polio vaccine. It is rarely given on its own.

## What if my child misses a needle?

Your child should get the next needle as soon as possible. If your child did not get the first needle at two months of age, your doctor will recommend a special "catch-up" schedule.

March 2002

Children between 15 months and five years of age who have never been vaccinated will need only one needle of the Hib vaccine and then additional doses of cPDT Polio vaccine. Your doctor will advise you about the required needles.

### **Is the Hib vaccine safe?**

Yes. Some children may have mild pain, swelling and redness for a few days at the spot where the needle was given. A very few children may get a mild fever, rash or hives.

**You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor.**

### **When should I call my doctor?**

Call your doctor if your child has any of the following within 3 days of getting the needle:

- high fever (over 40 C or 104 F);
- convulsions or seizures;
- very pale colour and serious drowsiness;
- hives;
- swelling of the face or mouth;
- trouble breathing;
- other serious problems.

### **Who should not get the Hib vaccine?**

The doctor may decide not to give your child's needle if your child has :

- a high fever or serious infection worse than a cold;
- a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to this vaccine;
- a severe allergy to any component of the vaccine.

### **Who should I talk to if I have any more questions about the Hib vaccine?**

Talk to your doctor or call your local public health unit for more information.

### **Your record of protection**

After your child receives any immunization, make sure the doctor updates the yellow personal Immunization Record card. You will need to provide this information to your local health unit when your child enters school. Keep your records in a safe place !

### **Government of Ontario**

For information about health services and resources :

[www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

For consumer-friendly health tips and information :

[www.HealthyOntario.com](http://www.HealthyOntario.com)

INFOline: 1-877-234-4343;

TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Telehealth Ontario:

1-866-797-0000; TTY 1-866-797-0007

INFOline is open during business hours and can provide general information on healthcare.

Telehealth Ontario is a 24/7 service which uses nurse practitioners to answer your immediate health concerns.