



Childhood immunisation

Throughout September 2023, the Public Health Agency (PHA) is running a Living Well campaign in over 500 community pharmacies highlighting the importance of vaccination and the protection provided by the childhood immunisation programme. If you have any queries about any aspect of your child's immunisations, you can call into a participating pharmacy during this time to find out more about the programme. A free information leaflet, [Immunisation protects](#), is also available in pharmacies. For any queries after September 2023, please speak to the school nurse or contact your GP surgery.

Why vaccination is important

After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention in the world for saving lives, promoting good health and preventing serious illness.

Due to the high number of children receiving vaccinations in Northern Ireland over the past number of decades, many serious childhood infectious diseases are rarely heard of.

Recently, however, vaccination rates have seen a slight decrease. We need vaccination rates to remain high in Northern Ireland to prevent many of these serious diseases returning from parts of the world where they still occur. If this happens, children who are not vaccinated will be at risk from these infections and potentially life-changing complications – even death.

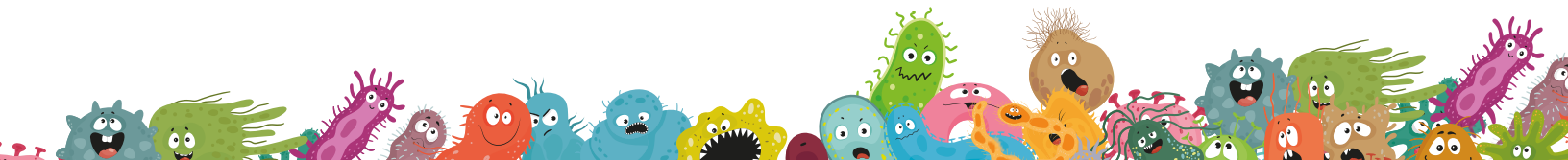
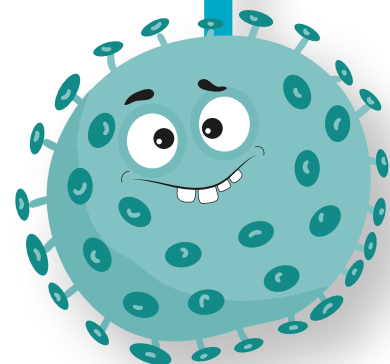
Given the rise in measles cases in the UK and across Europe, the PHA is encouraging all parents and guardians to get their children vaccinated according to the routine childhood immunisation programme.

The measles virus spreads incredibly easily and a fall in vaccination rates is leaving more children vulnerable to infection. The main symptoms of measles are a fever and a rash. But it can cause more serious complications, including meningitis, and an infection can be fatal.

That is why the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is part of routine childhood immunisations. It's particularly important to get children vaccinated before travel as measles may be more common in other countries.

More information can be found in the leaflet: [Measles: Don't let your child catch it](#)

Measles





Key information

- After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention in the world – immunisation saves lives and promotes good health.
- Vaccines are safe and effective.
- Vaccines prepare the body to fight serious infectious diseases that your child could encounter in the future.
- You can check your child's Personal Child Health Record, also known as the 'red book', to ensure all immunisations are up to date.
- You should check school bags and return signed consent forms on time for the school-based vaccination programme. Please talk to your child about vaccination to address any questions they may have, and it's important they eat a good breakfast on the day.
- More information on the childhood immunisation programme is available at www.nidirect.gov.uk/childhood-immunisation
- The PHA has created a vaccination webinar for parents: www.pha.site/vaccination-webinar-parents

Vaccine facts

It is important to know that vaccines:

- have not led to increases in autism, asthma or other auto-immune disorders
- do not overload or weaken the immune system – it is safe to give children several vaccines at a time and this reduces the amount of injections they need
- do not cause allergies
- do not contain mercury
- do not contain ingredients that cause harm in such small amounts – you can speak to your GP practice if you have any concerns about ingredients such as egg protein or pork gelatine

Questions and answers

If you have any further questions, talk to the school nurse or ring your GP practice.

Q: Why should children get vaccinated?

A: Vaccines will protect your child for many years against a range of serious illnesses. Without vaccination your child is at greater risk of getting these illnesses. Young babies are particularly vulnerable to infections, so they need to be protected as early as possible (before they come into contact with life-threatening diseases).

Q: What happens if my child is not present on the day when the HSC school nursing team comes into the school to offer vaccinations?

A: If your child misses the vaccination or is unwell on the day, school nursing teams will aim to provide catch up vaccinations at a later date. If your child misses these opportunities, you will be sent a letter by the HSC school nursing team asking you to contact your GP practice to arrange an appointment for your child to get the vaccination.

Q: I can't find my child's red book to check what vaccines they've had. How can I get this information?

A: If you are unable to access your child's red book, speak to your health visitor or GP. If your child has missed a vaccination, please contact your GP practice to book an appointment as soon as you can to make sure they have maximum protection against disease.



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