

Your baby's immune system and vaccines

Check what you know about your baby's immune system and vaccines

- ☐ I know why it is important for my baby to get all vaccines on time
- ☐ I know why my child can safely get more than one vaccine at a time
- ☐ I know that getting my baby immunized is the best way to protect them from serious diseases
- ☐ I know how the immune system works
- ☐ I know how vaccines work with the immune system

If you are unsure about any of the statements above, continue reading to learn more.

Keep your child safe. Get all vaccines on time.

By getting all the vaccines on time, your child can be protected from many diseases over a lifetime.

What is the immune system and how does it work?

You may have heard about viruses and bacteria, often called germs. Some germs that enter your baby's body can make your baby very sick.

From birth, the immune system protects your baby from harmful germs. Your baby's immune system is made of organs and cells that work together to protect them.

Two important parts of the immune system are antibodies and memory cells. Antibodies help kill harmful germs. Memory cells help the immune system respond quickly to an infection and prevent disease.

How does a vaccine work?

Vaccines help your baby's immune system make antibodies without your baby getting the disease.

Vaccines also allow your baby's immune system to make memory cells. Memory cells protect against harmful germs for a long time. For example, after your child gets the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, they develop memory cells to protect them against these diseases long after their immunization.

Can my baby get more than one vaccine at a time?

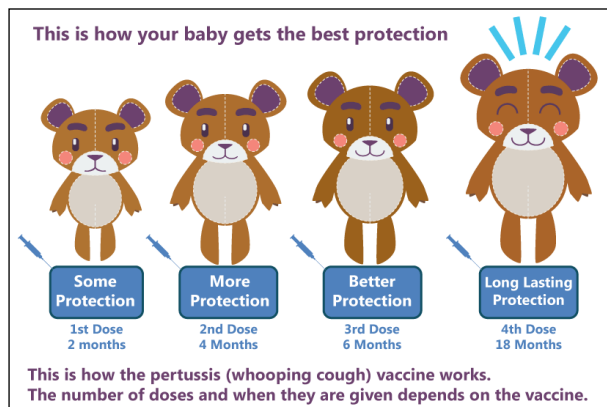
Yes. Your baby's immune system is amazing. Every day from birth, a baby's body defends itself against thousands of germs in the air, food, water and on objects.

Getting more than one vaccine at the same time does not wear out the immune system. Only a very small part of your baby's immune system is used for a short time even when your baby gets several vaccines.

Why is it important for my baby to get their vaccines on time?

Vaccines work best when your baby gets them on time and before they are exposed to the viruses or bacteria that cause disease. The timing of every vaccine and dose in the immunization schedule has been carefully planned to protect your child from multiple diseases in a safe and effective way. Following the recommended schedule protects your baby from many diseases when they need it most. Please visit the [Immunization schedules for children](#).

To protect your baby as soon as possible, your baby should get their recommended vaccines starting at 2 months of age. Most vaccines need more than one dose to give the best protection. The doses are usually given 2 or more months apart.



For example, pertussis (whooping cough) can be a deadly disease for babies. Babies need their first dose of the pertussis vaccine at 2 months of age to begin building protection against whooping cough. They will have full protection in infancy after 3 doses. The fourth dose given at 18 months of age is a booster dose to provide protection to last until their next dose at 4 to 6 years of age.

For more information

For more information on childhood immunization, visit:

- [HealthLinkBC File #50b The benefits of immunizing your child](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50c Childhood vaccines are safe](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50d Childhood vaccines: What is in the vaccines and why](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50e A better immunization experience for your child](#)



For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/health-library/healthlinkbc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C., visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.