



Under the National Immunisation Program (NIP), babies and young children have access to free childhood immunisations which provide protection against multiple infectious diseases during their first vulnerable years of life.

In July 2018, the childhood immunisation schedule was updated. Your child's due date for their next immunisation/s has not changed. Immunisations are still given at 2\*, 4, 6, 12, 18 months and 4 years of age.

## Why has the schedule changed?

The recommended vaccination schedule changes over time for a number of reasons:

- new vaccines become available to protect children from a disease
- new "combination vaccines" reduce the number of needles children need to get
- a vaccine is improved or made safer
- fewer doses of a vaccine are shown to work just as well
- booster doses are shown to improve protection
- moving a dose to a different age is shown to improve protection or work just as well.

The changes outlined below have been made on advice from immunisation experts to provide children with the best protection.

## Summary of key changes

Diseases covered	Previous schedule	Schedule from 1 July 2018
Meningococcal C and <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b (Hib)	Menitorix® vaccine at 12 months	Being replaced by a <b>Meningococcal ACWY</b> (Nimenrix®) vaccine at 12 months and a <b>Hib</b> vaccine (ActHIB®) at 18 months
Pneumococcal	Prevenar 13® at 2*, 4 and 6 months	Prevenar 13® at 2*, 4 and <b>12 months</b>

## Meningococcal vaccination

From 1 July 2018, a meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be given to children at 12 months of age. This new vaccine will replace the previous combination meningococcal C-*Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine given at 12 months of age.

Meningococcal is a rare but very serious infection that can lead to blood poisoning (septicaemia) and brain infection (meningitis).

Meningococcal disease is caused by different types of the meningococcal bacteria—A, B, C, W and Y.

Previously, people with an infection from meningococcal types W and Y were rarely seen in Australia, but these have been increasing in recent years. The new vaccine will help protect against four types of meningococcal disease (A, C, W and Y) instead of one (C).

### Who is eligible for the meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be given to all children who are due for their 12 month vaccinations from 1 July 2018 onwards.

Children who have already received their meningococcal C vaccine at 12 months of age are not eligible to receive the meningococcal ACWY vaccine under the NIP. Parents may purchase the meningococcal ACWY on the private market if they wish to, or check if your state/territory offers a funded program.

### Is the meningococcal ACWY vaccine at 12 months of age required as part of the Government's No Jab, No Pay policy?

Meningococcal C vaccination at 12 months of age continues to be a requirement for eligibility for child care subsidies and family assistance payments. From 1 July 2018, the meningococcal C vaccine is being replaced by a meningococcal ACWY vaccine. A child who receives the meningococcal ACWY vaccine at 12 months of age will meet the requirements for child care subsidies and family assistance payments.

### What if my child has already received meningococcal ACWY vaccines before 12 months of age?

Even if your child has had one or more meningococcal ACWY vaccine doses before 12 months of age, a booster dose from 12 months of age, and at least 2 months of age after a previous dose, is required for the best protection.

*Can I claim for reimbursement if my child received privately funded meningococcal ACWY vaccine before the program started?*

No. The Australian Government provides vaccines at no cost through the NIP and no reimbursements are made for privately purchased vaccines including those purchased before the program started.

*Is the meningococcal B vaccine also free?*

No. Immunisation against meningococcal B disease is only available on private prescription and there is no discount under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

If you wish for your child to receive the meningococcal B vaccine you can make an appointment with your GP or other vaccination provider to have it discussed, prescribed and administered. Costs may vary by vaccination provider and chemist.

## Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) vaccination

From 1 July 2018, the *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine will be given as a separate vaccine for children at 18 months of age.

Hib (also called *Haemophilus influenzae* type b) is a serious disease in young children. It can affect the airways, skin, joints, ears or brain.

Previously, a Hib vaccine booster was given in a combination vaccine with meningococcal C to children at 12 months of age. The meningococcal ACWY vaccine is not available as a combination vaccine with Hib and so the Hib vaccine booster must now be given separately.

Four doses of Hib vaccine are still being provided through the NIP:

- as part of a combination vaccine at 2\*, 4, and 6 months of age; and
- alone at 18 months of age.

Immunisation experts have reviewed the evidence and recommended the fourth dose be moved from 12 months of age to 18 months of age. It has been judged safe and effective to move this dose of Hib to 18 months of age.

*What if my child has already received a Hib vaccine at 12 months of age?*

All children 18 months of age from 1 July 2018 will be offered a Hib vaccine booster. If your child already received a Hib vaccine at 12 months of age (children born between 1 January 2017 to 30 June 2017) they are not required to have an additional dose, however it is safe for them to have one. If you choose not to have the dose at 18 months of age, there is no impact on your eligibility for child care subsidies or family assistance payments.

## Pneumococcal vaccination

From 1 July 2018, pneumococcal vaccination will be given at 2\*, 4 and 12 months of age instead of 2\*, 4, and 6 months of age.

Previously, pneumococcal vaccination was given to all children at 2\*, 4 and 6 months of age.

Immunisation experts have reviewed the evidence and recommended that Australia move pneumococcal vaccination to 2\*, 4 and **12 months** of age.

While the total number of doses has remained unchanged, the change in the schedule is expected to improve the protection provided by the childhood vaccination program.

**For some children who have specific risk factors, four doses are recommended at 2\*, 4, 6 and 12 months of age. These will still be provided for free. Your doctor will advise if your child should have 4 doses rather than 3.**

*What if my child has already received 3 doses of the pneumococcal vaccine before 12 months of age?*

All children 12 months of age from 1 July 2018 will be offered a pneumococcal vaccine. If your child already received a dose at 2, 4 and 6 months of age (children born 1 July 2017 to 30 December 2017), they are not required to have a fourth dose at 12 months of age, however it is safe for them to have one.

If you choose not to have the additional dose at 12 months of age, there is no impact on your eligibility for child care subsidies or family assistance payments.

## Safety of vaccines

All vaccines used in Australia must be approved for use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration, which monitors the safety of medicines in Australia. Before a vaccine can be licensed, it is rigorously tested over several years to ensure it is safe and that it works.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit: [tga.gov.au](http://tga.gov.au) or [health.gov.au/immunisation](http://health.gov.au/immunisation)

All vaccines can have unwanted side effects. Common side effects that may occur and resolve quickly include:

- injection site pain, redness and swelling
- low grade fever
- children can be unsettled, tired and grumpy.

Serious or unexpected vaccine reactions are very rare and should always be reported to your vaccination provider. If you have any questions or concerns make an appointment with your GP or other vaccination provider.

## To find out more about the National Immunisation Program:

- call the National Immunisation Hotline: 1800 671 811
- visit the Department of Health's immunisation website at [health.gov.au/immunisation](http://health.gov.au/immunisation)

### State and territory health department contact numbers:

ACT	02 6205 2300	SA	1300 232 272
NSW	1300 066 055	TAS	1800 671 738
NT	08 8922 8044	VIC	1300 882 008
WA	08 9321 1312	QLD	Contact your local Public Health Unit