



# What vaccines are recommended now my child is **4 years?**

 SKAI : Sharing Knowledge About Immunisation

**Now your child is four years old, a combined DTPa-IPV vaccine is recommended. This vaccine strengthens children's immunity to four diseases (see next page). It is given as a needle, usually in your child's arm.**

## How will the vaccines affect my child?

The DTPa-IPV vaccine affects children in much the same way as the vaccines they have had before. The needles hurt a bit and most children cry for a few minutes afterwards.

There are some things your doctor or nurse can do to make getting needles easier for your child. They may be able to give both needles at once.

There are also some things you can do to help. There is a patch you can buy at the chemist that can be used to numb your child's skin. These need to be stuck on about an hour before you visit the doctor or nurse. You can bring an activity or toy to distract your child or encourage them to take deep breaths during the visit. Hand-held video games, blowing paper windmills or bubble mix, and comforting cuddles during vaccination or straight after are also known to help reduce pain<sup>1</sup>.

Vaccines can make some children feel a little unwell for a few days. The most common reactions to these vaccines are redness, soreness and swelling where the needle went in, not wanting to eat very much, fever, a slight headache, an achy feeling all over, or a slight swelling under their ears. These symptoms can make children grizzly or unsettled for a day or two. Some children get a small hard bump (nodule) in one or both of the spots where the needles went in. These bumps don't usually hurt and go away by themselves after a few weeks.

## What can I do if my child gets one of these reactions?

If your child feels hot, it can help to dress them in light (summer) clothes and give them extra water to drink. If your child has a sore, red spot where the needle went in, it can help to put a cool cloth on it. Paracetamol (Panadol or Dymadon) can also help to ease a fever and relieve soreness. (Always follow the instructions on the packet.) Medical research has found that cuddles really do make children feel better. You can remind your doctor or nurse to give you a leaflet to help you remember these things today. **If you are worried about your child's reaction to a vaccination, you can get help from your doctor, or the nearest emergency department, or you can call Health Direct on 1800 222 222 at any time of the day or night.**

## Do the vaccines work?

The vaccines almost always prevent children from getting diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis or polio<sup>2</sup>. Sometimes children who are vaccinated still catch one of these diseases, but they usually get much milder symptoms and recover more quickly than children who haven't had the vaccine.

## What are the diseases these vaccines protect my child from?

One of the needles strengthens their immunity to measles, mumps and rubella, and protects your child against varicella (chickenpox). All of these diseases are less common than they were before most children living in Australia were vaccinated, but are still common in other nearby countries. Children can still get these diseases in Australia, especially if they aren't vaccinated.

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### Are the diseases serious?

**Diphtheria** is a serious disease that can cause a membrane (or skin) to grow over a child’s throat and stop them from breathing. Diphtheria is very rare in Australia now, but the vaccine is still used to protect children from catching diphtheria from people who have travelled to places where it is more common<sup>2</sup>.

**Tetanus** is sometimes called lockjaw. Tetanus affects all the muscles in the body, including the ones used for breathing. The germ that causes tetanus lives in the soil, which means children can get tetanus through a cut, a burn, a bite or even just a prick (from a nail or a thorn)<sup>2</sup>.

**Pertussis** is usually called whooping cough. It spreads very easily from one person to another through the air when someone who has it coughs or sneezes. The germ that causes it irritates the airways causing coughing fits that can be very severe. Small babies can die from whooping cough<sup>2</sup>.

**Polio** causes muscle paralysis in the limbs and can also affect the breathing muscles and the heart. It is rare in Australia but more common in countries nearby. Children catch polio when they put their hands or toys in their mouths after someone who has the disease (but may not be sick yet) has touched them<sup>2</sup>.

### I’ve heard vaccines can have serious side effects. Is this true?

Serious side effects can happen, but they are very, very rare. Fewer than one in one million (1,000,000) children have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to one of the ingredients in one of the vaccines<sup>2</sup>. If this happens, it usually happens before you and your child leave the clinic. Your doctor or nurse knows how to help children who have this reaction to recover very quickly. Anaphylaxis is frightening but extremely rare.

Side effects that last more than a few hours or a few days are extremely rare and happen for less than one in one million (1,000,000) vaccinated children<sup>2</sup>. **If you are worried about your child, you can get help from your doctor or the nearest emergency department or call Health Direct on 1800 022 222.**

### Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information about childhood vaccination or the diseases they protect against you can:

- go to the SKAI website, [talkingaboutimmunisation.org](http://talkingaboutimmunisation.org)
- call the **National Immunisation Hotline on 1800 671 811**
- or you can write your questions in the space below and ask your doctor or nurse when you see them.

### What is next?

When your child starts high school, it is recommended they have booster doses of some of the vaccines they have already had. A short series of HPV vaccines is also recommended for adolescents to protect them from the human papillomavirus (HPV), which can cause cancers of the mouth, throat and reproductive organs.

### What questions would you like answered before getting your child’s needles?

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I have no questions

#### References

1. Taddio A, et al. Reducing pain during vaccine injections: clinical practice guideline. Canadian Medical Association Journal 2015;187:975-982.
2. Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition (Updated June 2015). Australian Government Department of Health: Canberra.