

Vaccine Side Effects

While vaccines are very safe, like any medicine they do sometimes cause reactions. Mostly, these are mild “local” reactions (soreness or redness where the shot is given) or a low-grade fever. They may last a day or two and then go away. Sometimes more serious reactions are associated with vaccines. These are much less common. Some of them are clearly caused by the vaccine; some have been reported after vaccination but are so rare that it is impossible to tell if they were caused by the vaccine or would have happened anyway. We will mention any side effects specifically associated with each vaccine in the descriptions below.

Some children also have allergies, and occasionally a child will have a severe allergy to a substance that is component of a vaccine. There is a very small risk (estimated at around one in a million) that any vaccine could trigger a severe reaction in a child who has such an allergy. Should one of these allergic reactions occur, it would happen within several minutes to several hours after the vaccination, and would be characterized by hives, difficulty breathing, paleness, weakness, hoarseness or wheezing, a rapid heart beat, and dizziness. Doctors’ offices are equipped to deal with these reactions. Always tell your provider if your child has any known allergies.

Vaccine Precautions

A child who has had a severe (life-threatening) **allergic reaction** to a previous dose of any vaccine should not get another dose of that vaccine. A child with a known severe (life-threatening) **allergy** to any vaccine component should not get a vaccine containing that component.

If a child has any **moderate or severe illness** on the day any vaccine is scheduled, it should probably be delayed until the child has recovered. A mild illness or fever is usually not a reason to delay an immunization.

We will mention any additional precautions for each vaccine in the following descriptions.

4. Hib Vaccine

There are several brands of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine used in the United States. They are all inactivated (killed) vaccines, made from a only a small part of the Hib bacterium. All brands work equally well, protecting 95%–100% of children from Hib disease. The first Hib vaccine was licensed in 1985, and several improved versions have become available since then.

Children should get either 3 or 4 doses of Hib vaccine, depending on which brand your doctor uses. The vaccine is recommended at 2, 4, 6, and 12–15 months of age. The 6-month dose not given with one brand of vaccine.

Hib Vaccine Side Effects

Hib is a very safe vaccine. It cannot cause Hib disease or meningitis, and is not known to cause any other serious reactions. About 2 children in every 100 who get Hib vaccine have redness, swelling or warmth where the shot was given, or a fever over 101°F. These reactions usually begin within 24 hours after the shot and last 2 or 3 days.

Hib Vaccine Precautions

In addition to the normal precautions for all vaccines, shown on page 30, Hib vaccine should not be given to children **younger than 4 weeks of age**. This is not because it is not safe but because it might not protect as well if given too early.

Combination Vaccines

Several vaccines are sometimes combined into a single shot. These are called combination vaccines. Some combination vaccines are used routinely — DTaP is a combination; so is MMR. There are currently four other combination vaccines available for children. One combines DTaP and Hib vaccines; the second Hib and hepatitis B; the third combines DTaP, hepatitis B, and polio, and the fourth combines measles, mumps, rubella and varicella. The advantage of combination vaccines is, of course, that your children get the protection of all the component vaccines while getting fewer injections.

Each of these vaccines has certain restrictions, and not all providers carry them. But ask your provider about them if you are interested in reducing the number of shots your child must get for complete vaccine coverage



This document can be found on the CDC website at:

http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hib/downloads/pg_side-effects_hib.pdf