Immunisations and Health Checks

A guide for parents, from birth to four years

In the first four years your child has a series of immunisations and regular health and development checks. Together they protect your child from serious disease and make sure their growth, development, eyesight, hearing and teeth stay on track. The vaccines on the NSW schedule are free for children who have, or can get, a Medicare card. Bring the Blue Book to every visit.

01 WHY IMMUNISE

Vaccines teach the immune system to recognise and fight a germ before your child meets it. Whooping cough, measles and meningococcal disease can make young children very sick, and they are most dangerous in the first years of life. Each vaccine is timed for the age it gives the best protection, so keeping to the schedule matters. When most children are immunised, babies too young to be vaccinated are protected too.

02 BEFORE BIRTH AND THE FIRST MONTHS

Vaccines in pregnancy pass protection to your baby through the placenta, covering the first months before their own vaccines take effect. Each one is free in every pregnancy.

- **Whooping cough,** ideally between 20 and 32 weeks.
- **Flu,** at any stage of pregnancy.
- **RSV,** from 28 weeks. RSV is the most common cause of chest infections that put babies in hospital.

If you did not have the RSV vaccine in pregnancy, or your baby was born less than two weeks after it, your baby can have a free RSV antibody injection called nirsevimab (Beyfortus). It is usually given in hospital. If it was missed, your GP can give it up to 6 months of age.

03 YOUR CHILD'S SCHEDULE

These are the routine vaccines for all children in NSW, with the health and development checks recorded in the Blue Book. Most vaccine visits involve two or three vaccines at once. This is safe, and it means fewer visits and earlier protection.

AGE	VACCINES	HEALTH CHECK
Birth	Hepatitis B, usually given in hospital within a day of birth.	Newborn check and hearing screen in hospital. Check at 1 to 4 weeks.
6 weeks	6-in-1 injection: diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B, polio and Hib (a cause of meningitis). Pneumococcal injection. Rotavirus drops by mouth.	6 to 8 week check: weight, length, head size, hips and eyes.
4 months	The same three vaccines as at 6 weeks.	No routine check.
6 months	6-in-1 injection.	Growth, eyes, first look at teeth.
12 months	Measles, mumps and rubella. Meningococcal ACWY. Pneumococcal.	Growth, eyes, teeth, early words and standing.

AGE	VACCINES	HEALTH CHECK
18 months	Measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox. Diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. Hib.	Weight and height, walking, words and play.
2 years	*No vaccines due*	Growth and BMI, talking, teeth, behaviour.
3 years	*No vaccines due*	Healthy Kids Check with your GP (see PI-15).
4 years	Diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio.	4 year check, and free StEPS eyesight test.
Every year	Flu vaccine from 6 months to under 5 years. A child under 9 having it for the first time needs two doses, four weeks apart.	

Rotavirus has strict age limits. The first dose must be given before 15 weeks and the second before 25 weeks, so try not to delay the 6 week and 4 month visits. It cannot be caught up later.

04 EXTRA PROTECTION FOR SOME CHILDREN

- **Meningococcal B.** Recommended for all babies and young children. In NSW it is free only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with certain medical conditions; other families can buy it on prescription. It often causes fever, so your GP will ask you to give paracetamol with the injection and two more doses six hours apart.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children** also receive an extra pneumococcal dose at 6 months.
- **Medical conditions.** Children born very early, or with some heart, lung, kidney or immune conditions, may need extra doses. Your GP will tell you if this applies to your child.

05 HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT CHECKS

Each check is a chance to see how your child is growing and developing, and to talk about anything on your mind, from feeding and sleep to behaviour and safety. Your GP, our practice nurse or your local child and family health nurse can do them, and many fall at the same ages as vaccines.

- **Weight and growth.** Your child is weighed and measured at each check, with head size in the first year, and the results are plotted on the Blue Book growth charts. The pattern over several checks matters more than any single measurement, and every child grows at their own pace.
- **Development.** We look at milestones such as smiling, sitting, walking, talking and play. Filling in the Learn the Signs. Act Early checklist in the Blue Book before each check is a good way to prepare.
- **Eyes and hearing.** Eyes are checked at every visit, and NSW offers a free eyesight test for each eye at 4, usually at preschool or day care. Hearing is screened soon after birth, with a full test later if there are risk factors.
- **Hips and teeth.** Hips are checked in the early months. Teeth and gums are checked from 6 months with a quick lift of the top lip, looking for early signs of decay.
- **The 3 year Healthy Kids Check.** From 1 November 2026, Medicare funds a longer GP check for every child aged 3. See our separate sheet, PI-15.

Don't wait. If your child is not meeting a milestone, has lost a skill they had, or something about their development worries you, talk to us or your child and family health nurse. Getting help early makes a real difference.

06 ON THE DAY

- **A mild cold is not a reason to wait.** A runny nose or slight cough does not stop vaccines working. If your child has a high fever or is clearly unwell, we may delay a few days.
- **Tell the nurse or GP if your child** has had a serious reaction to a vaccine, has a severe allergy, has a weakened immune system or takes medicine that affects it, has had a blood product in the past year, or has ever had a bowel blockage called intussusception.
- **Comfort helps.** A feed, a cuddle or a dummy during and after the injection helps, and a toy is a good distraction for older children.
- **Stay for 15 minutes** after the vaccines so we can help quickly in the rare event of an allergic reaction.

07 AFTER IMMUNISATION

Most reactions are mild and settle within a day or two. Your child may have redness, swelling or soreness where the needle went in, a mild fever, or be unsettled, sleepy or off their food. A small, hard lump at the injection site can last a few weeks.

- Offer extra feeds or fluids, and a cool, damp cloth on a sore injection site.
- Paracetamol can help if your child has a fever or is uncomfortable. Follow the dose on the pack for your child's weight. It is not needed routinely before vaccines, apart from meningococcal B.
- 5 to 12 days after a measles vaccine, some children have a mild fever or a faint rash. This is not infectious and goes by itself.

08 RECORDS, CHILDCARE AND CATCHING UP

- **Childcare and preschool.** In NSW, enrolment needs an Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register; the Blue Book is not accepted. Download it through your Medicare online account or the Medicare app, or call 1800 653 809.
- **Family payments.** Some Centrelink family payments also depend on your child being up to date.
- **Missed a vaccine?** It is never too late. Catch-up vaccines are free for anyone under 20. If your child was vaccinated overseas, bring their records so we can add them to the register.

09 USEFUL CONTACTS

- **healthdirect** 1800 022 222, for health advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day.
- **NSW child and family health nurses** offer free checks and parenting support. Ask us, or find your local centre through NSW Health.
- **Poisons Information Centre** 13 11 26, 24 hours a day.
- **Australian Immunisation Register** 1800 653 809, for your child's immunisation history.

SEE YOUR GP IF

- A fever lasts more than two days
- The injection site is getting more red, swollen or painful after two days
- Your child seems unwell in a way that worries you
- You are worried about your child's growth, development, eyesight or hearing
- You are unsure what is due next

GET URGENT HELP

Call 000, or go to the nearest emergency department, if your child has:

- swelling of the face, lips or tongue, noisy breathing or trouble breathing
- become floppy, very pale or hard to wake
- a seizure (fit)
- after rotavirus drops, bouts of hard crying with legs drawn up, repeated vomiting or blood in their poo

This sheet gives general information. It does not replace advice from your GP, who knows your child's health and history.

Sources: NSW Health. NSW Immunisation Schedule. October 2026. Australian Government. Australian Immunisation Handbook. NSW Health. My Personal Health Record (Blue Book); Learn the Signs. Act Early; Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening (StEPS); Infant RSV immunisation (nirsevimab) fact sheet; Childcare and pre-school entry and immunisation.