

# Hib Disease and the Vaccine (Shot) to Prevent It

Last updated February 2014

**The best way to protect against Hib disease is by getting the Hib vaccine. Doctors recommend that all children get the vaccine.**

## Why should my child get the Hib vaccine?

The Hib vaccine:

- Protects your child from Hib disease, which can cause lifelong disability and be deadly
- Protects your child from the most common type of Hib disease, meningitis (an infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord)
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child)

## Is it safe?

The Hib vaccine is very safe, and it is effective at preventing Hib disease. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most children who get the Hib shot have no side effects.

## What are the side effects?

The most common side effects are usually mild and last 2 or 3 days. They include the following:

- Redness, swelling, and warmth where the child got the shot
- Fever

Doctors recommend that your child get 4 doses of the Hib vaccine for best protection. Your child will need one dose at each of the following ages:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months (for some brands)
- 12 through 15 months



## What is Hib disease?

Hib disease is a serious illness caused by the bacteria *Haemophilus influenzae* type b. Babies and children younger than 5 years old are most at risk for Hib disease. It can cause lifelong disability and be deadly.

## What are the symptoms of Hib disease?

Hib disease causes different symptoms depending on which part of the body it affects.

The most common type of Hib disease is meningitis. This is an infection of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It causes the following:

- Fever and headache
- Confusion
- Stiff neck
- Pain from bright lights
- Poor eating and drinking, low alertness, and vomiting (in babies)

Hib disease can also cause the following:

- Throat swelling that makes it hard to breathe
- Joint infection
- Skin infection
- Pneumonia (lung infection)
- Bone infection

## How serious is it?

Hib disease is very serious. Most children with Hib disease need care in the hospital. Even with treatment, as many as 1 out of 20 children with Hib meningitis dies. As many as 1 out of 5 children who survive Hib meningitis will have brain damage or become deaf.

## **How does Hib spread?**

Hib spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Usually, the Hib bacteria stay in a person's nose and throat and do not cause illness. But if the bacteria spread into the lungs or blood, the person will get very sick. Spread of Hib is common among family members and in childcare centers.

## **Where can I learn more about the Hib vaccine and my child?**

To learn more about the Hib vaccine, talk to your child's doctor, call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend all children receive their vaccines according to the recommended schedule.