





Part 2: The Vaccination Office Visit

Before the Vaccination Visit

If you have a vaccination record card for your child, take it along so the provider can enter the shots given today. If she is getting her first vaccination(s), ask for a card. This record could come in handy later to show that your child has had the vaccinations necessary to get into school, or if you move or switch doctors. The provider should enter the vaccinations into an electronic medical record or vaccine registry.



The doctor or nurse will ask you some questions about your child. Be prepared to tell them:

- **If your child ever had a severe reaction to a dose of any vaccine.** Babies often get a sore leg or a mild fever after vaccinations. But let your provider know if your baby has ever had a more serious reaction. There are a few uncommon reactions that could be a reason to not get another dose of certain vaccines.
- **If your child has any severe allergies.** A severe allergy is one that could be life-threatening. A baby who has a severe allergy to a substance that is in a vaccine shouldn't get that vaccine. Milder allergies aren't a problem.

You can't be expected to know whether or not your baby is allergic to every substance in every vaccine, but report any allergies you do

know about, including eggs, gelatin, any antibiotics, yeast, or latex. Your doctor or nurse will be able to check them against lists of vaccine ingredients.

Don't be too worried that your child might have allergies you don't know about. Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are rare (around 1 in a million), and your provider is prepared to deal with them if they do occur.

- **If your child has an immune system problem.**

A child with a damaged or suppressed immune system should not get vaccines containing live virus, such as MMR, varicella, or rotavirus. Immune system problems can be caused by diseases such as AIDS, leukemia, sickle cell disease, or cancer, or by medical treatments such as steroids, chemotherapy, or radiation.

Your doctor, nurse, or other provider will be able to help you answer any questions.

During the Vaccination Visit

Your provider should give you a Vaccine Information Statement (VIS) for each vaccine your child receives. The VIS contains useful information about the vaccine, including its risks and benefits. If you would like to review these statements before the office visit, you can find them online at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/>.

Your provider will ask questions to help them determine if there are reasons your baby should not get certain vaccines.

Always ask your provider if you have any questions or would like more information.

Your provider might ask you to hold your baby in a certain way to steady the arm or leg where the shot will be given. These techniques are designed to keep children still without actually holding them down or frightening them.

Many providers like to keep a child in the office for observation for about 15 or 20 minutes after getting vaccines, in the unlikely event of an allergic reaction or in case the child becomes dizzy or faints.

If your child has a moderate or severe cold or other illness, you might be asked to postpone vaccinations until he gets better.

Be sure that all vaccinations that are given get recorded in your baby's shot record.

After the Vaccination Visit

Sometimes a child will have a fever or a sore leg or arm where a shot was given. You can give your child a non-aspirin pain reliever to reduce any pain or fever that might follow vaccinations. Giving the child plenty of fluids to drink can also help reduce a fever. A cool, wet washcloth over the sore area can help relieve pain.

If your baby cries for 3 or more hours without stopping, if he seems limp or unresponsive, if he starts having seizures (convulsions), or if you are worried at all about how your baby looks or feels, call your provider right away. Serious reactions are not common, but your provider will know how to deal with them if they occur.

Again, severe allergic reactions after a vaccination are very rare, but if one were to happen, be ready to respond to it:

- If an allergic reaction occurs, it will usually happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.
- Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, dizziness, swelling of the throat, hives, fast heart-beat, hoarseness or wheezing.



- If your child shows these signs, call 9-1-1 or get him to the nearest hospital right away.
- Be ready to tell the doctor when the reaction occurred, what vaccinations were given, and when.

In the unlikely event that your child does have any serious reaction to a vaccination, there are two programs you should know about afterward:

- **VAERS. The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System** is a system for reporting possible vaccine side effects. If your child has an unusual medical condition after getting a vaccine, even if you don't know whether it was caused by the vaccine, you should report it to VAERS. One of the jobs of VAERS is to collect these reports and use the data to help determine whether specific medical problems might be caused by vaccines.

Your provider will usually file a VAERS report for you. However, you can also file it yourself. For more information, visit the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov.

- **Vaccine Injury Compensation Program.** If you believe your child was seriously injured by a vaccine, there is a no-fault federal program that can help compensate you for his care. To learn more about the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, visit their website at www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation.

Most parents will never need these programs, but they are there if you do.



