

# *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) *Immunisation information*

**The National Immunisation Program provides free Hib vaccine to babies at 12 months of age.**

## Hib

Hib disease was the most frequent cause of life threatening infection in children under five years of age before the introduction of routine Hib vaccines in 1993. The incidence of Hib infection before a vaccine was available was highest in children under five years of age and rarely occurred after five years of age. Despite its name it is not related in any way to influenza. *Haemophilus influenzae* is a bacteria which lives normally in a person's upper respiratory tract.

Hib disease may cause:

- Meningitis, an infection of the membrane covering the brain
- Epiglottitis, swelling of the throat which can block breathing
- Septic arthritis, infection of a joint
- Cellulitis, infection of the tissue under the skin, usually on the face
- Pneumonia.

These conditions can develop quickly and if left untreated, they can rapidly cause death.

## Hib immunisation

Several doses of Hib vaccine are required to protect children against Hib. The Hib component is in a combination vaccine with diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B and polio called *Infanrix hexa*<sup>®</sup>. This injection is given at two, four and six months of age. A booster dose of Hib is needed at 12 months of age as a separate injection called *Hiberix*<sup>®</sup>.

Children up to the fifth birthday who are not immunised as babies should be given Hib vaccine if they have not received a complete Hib course.

The *Hiberix*<sup>®</sup> vaccine is made of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b 'sugars' joined to a harmless tetanus toxoid.

## Possible side effects of Hib vaccine

Reactions to Hib vaccine are much less frequent than the complications of the diseases.

## Common side effects

- Low grade fever
- Soreness, redness and swelling at the injection site
- A temporary lump at the injection site

## Extremely rare side effect

- Severe allergic reaction

If mild reactions do occur, they may last one to two days. The side effects can be reduced by:

- Drinking extra fluids
- Not overdressing
- Placing a cold wet cloth on the sore injection site
- Giving your child paracetamol to lower the fever (note the recommended dose for the age of your child)

If reactions are severe or persistent, or if you are worried about your child, contact your doctor or hospital.

## Pre-immunisation checklist

Before your child is immunised, tell the doctor or nurse if any of the following apply:

- Are unwell on the day of immunisation (temperature over 38.5° C)
- Have had a severe reaction to any vaccine
- Have a severe allergy to any vaccine component

## Further information

The following websites offer resources and further information

[www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation)

[www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)



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