

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and Hepatitis B

Immunisation Information

The National Immunisation Program provides free *Haemophilus influenzae* type b and Hepatitis B vaccine to infants at two, four and 12 months of age.

Haemophilus influenzae type b (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.

Hepatitis B

The hepatitis B virus affects the liver and can cause:

- Fever
- Nausea and diarrhoea
- Tiredness
- Dark urine and yellow skin

Hepatitis B virus is usually spread through contact with the body fluids (blood, saliva, semen) of an infected person, or from mother to child at birth. Most young children who catch the hepatitis B virus become 'carriers'. This means they can pass the disease onto other people even if they don't have symptoms.

If your child contracts hepatitis B and becomes a 'carrier', they will have an increased risk of liver disease and cancer later in life.

Hib and Hepatitis B Immunisation

In Victoria the *Haemophilus influenzae* type b and hepatitis B vaccine is a combination vaccine designed to protect against both diseases in the one injection; the vaccine is called Comvax.

Several doses of Comvax vaccine are required to protect children against Hib and hepatitis B. The vaccine is administered at two and four months of age and a booster dose is given at 12 months of age.

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 Comvax vaccine is made of *Haemophilus influenzae* type b 'sugars' joined to an inactive meningococcal protein and the hepatitis B component contains a genetically engineered part of the virus grown in yeast cells. The vaccine also contains a small amount of aluminium salts.

Possible Side Effects: Hib (*Haemophilus influenzae* type B) and Hepatitis B Vaccine

Reactions to Hib and Hepatitis B 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

