BCG vaccine

Help protect your baby against tuberculosis (TB)

Easy Read 2017 edition

Leaflet has a small number of difficult words and ideas
We have made this leaflet as accessible as possible. There are still some difficult ideas in it. You might need to ask a friend, family member, carer or health professional to help you read this booklet.

If you see the symbol on the left it means there is a difficult medical word. This is a word that you might hear when you visit your doctor. You might also see it on letters and leaflets you get from your doctor.

Leaflets with the green thumbs up symbol on the cover have a small number of difficult words and ideas in them.

Leaflets with the orange thumbs up symbol on the cover have a few difficult words and ideas in them.

Leaflets with the red thumbs down symbol on the cover have quite a lot of difficult words and ideas in them.
Vaccine. This means a treatment that helps to stop people catching a disease.

What is the BCG vaccine?

The BCG **vaccine** is a small part of the germ that causes tuberculosis (TB) injected into your baby’s body.

The vaccine does not make your baby catch TB. It means your baby’s body will be able to fight off TB. We call this immunity.

Who is offered the vaccine?

The BCG vaccine is offered to babies who may come into contact with someone who has TB. This may be because their family comes from a country or area with a lot of TB.

The vaccine is usually given to your baby soon after birth, while your baby is still in hospital or soon after you go home. But it can be given at any time.
What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious disease. It can develop very quickly, especially in young children and babies. It can lead to meningitis in babies. Meningitis is a serious disease that affects the lining of the brain.

In young people and adults it usually affects the lungs, but can cause problems in other parts of the body too.

Most people get better after treatment, but this usually takes a few months.

Infection. This is a word for a disease or condition that one person has.

How can your baby catch TB?

A person with TB can cough and sneeze and pass the infection on.

You usually have to be close to the infected person for a long time to catch TB from them.
How many people get TB?
Not very many. Only about 350 people catch TB every year in Scotland. Most of the people who catch TB are aged 25 years or older.

TB can be caught all over the world.

Treating TB takes a long time. It is better to make sure you do not catch it in the first place.

Symptoms. This is the word we use to describe how an illness makes people feel.

What are the symptoms of TB?
You can get TB in any part of the body, so there are lots of different symptoms.

It can also affect babies differently from adults.

It is important that you know what signs and symptoms to look for.

You should tell your GP if you or any of your family has:

a cough that lasts for weeks
a fever and sweats at night

been losing weight for no reason

been feeling unwell

been feeling tired

been coughing up blood.
How will my baby be given the BCG vaccine?

Your baby will be given the BCG vaccine as an injection in their upper left arm.

Side effects. This is what we call it when some people get ill after having vaccines or medicine.

Are there any side effects?

After the injection a raised blister will appear. This shows that the vaccine is working.

Two to six weeks later a small spot will appear. This can be sore for a few days. It will heal but may leave a small scar.

Your baby may develop a small sore. If this is leaking, you should cover it with a dry bandage until a scab forms.
Do not use a waterproof plaster or creams.

If you are worried, or you think the sore has become infected, tell your GP.

**Why should my baby not have the BCG vaccine?**

The BCG vaccine should not be given if your baby:

- If your baby is ill with a fever they should not get the vaccine until they are well again.

- is having treatment for cancer or other serious conditions

- is HIV positive
has a skin condition – babies with some skin conditions can be given the vaccine in an area where the skin isn’t broken

lives with someone else who has TB

has had a bad allergic reaction to a part of the vaccine.

If you are not sure about any of these things, ask your GP.

**Do I need to know anything else?**

Your baby should not be given another vaccine in the same arm as the BCG vaccine for at least three months afterwards, otherwise the glands may swell.

You should also make sure that there is a record of the BCG vaccine in your child’s Personal Child Health Record (Red Book).
Where can I get more information?

Visit [www.immunisationscotland.org.uk](http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk)

Call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88**
(textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88; the helpline also has a translation service)

Ask the health professional who gave you this leaflet.

This publication is available online at
[www.healthscotland.com](http://www.healthscotland.com)
[www.immunisationscotland.org.uk](http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk)

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Please telephone

0131 314 5300

or email

nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net