

What is it?

Immunisation is the process of getting a vaccine against a serious disease. Vaccines work by producing an immune response in the body without causing illness. When you get a vaccine, your immune system creates antibodies which help to fight disease. If you come into contact with the same disease in the future, your immune system uses these antibodies to respond quickly and kill the disease before it develops. In some cases, you might get a less severe form.

Vaccines for different groups of people at higher risk are funded under the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's National Immunisation Program. Medicare keeps a record of your vaccine history.

Vaccines protect you, your family and others. Immunisation reduces the spread of disease and protects people before they come into contact with certain diseases. If you have any questions about vaccines, speak to your GP.

What do I need to do to prepare?

You don't need to do anything special to prepare. Your GP may discuss your vaccine status and the vaccines with you. Some vaccines are free (funded) while others are recommended but you need to buy them. It can take a few weeks for immunisations to be fully effective.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Do I need repeat vaccinations?*
- Are there any side effects?*
- How do I know if my vaccines are up to date?*



What will happen?

The most common way to get a vaccine is through your GP. Some other health services and places of work may also provide the vaccine. Most vaccines are given by injection.

Before you have your vaccine, your GP may discuss side effects, check your health and get your consent. They will then give you the vaccine according to the recommended dose. Most vaccines are given by injection in the arm or in the upper thigh for babies. Your GP may ask you to stay for 15 minutes after you have had your vaccine to check for any reactions.

What can I expect after?

You can resume your normal activities unless your GP tells you otherwise. Some people will experience some side effects the next day. This might be a sore arm, or sometimes fatigue, and muscle aches. This depends on the type of vaccine you are having. You can have most vaccines in your GP's office as part of a standard health check. Talk to your GP about your vaccine status and any vaccines you may need in future. If you have questions about side effects, your vaccine status or if you are immune for a disease, ask your GP.

Where can I learn more?

- **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care** – What to expect and what to do: health.gov.au
- **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care** – Immunisation: health.gov.au
- **NSW Health** – Childhood vaccinations: health.nsw.gov.au
- **NSW Health** – NSW Immunisation schedule: health.nsw.gov.au
- **Sharing Knowledge About Immunisation** – Talking about immunisation: skai.org.au