

Preparing for primary school

Are your child's immunisations up-to-date?

**STAY WELL
THIS WINTER**



Preparing your child for primary school is an exciting, but busy, time for parents. An important part of your plans should be checking that your child is up-to-date with their immunisations.

By now, children should have received their pre-school immunisations, often called pre-school boosters. These are important as they strengthen your child's immunity to help them fight off disease and infection as they begin school.

If you're unsure whether your child has had their pre-school vaccinations, you can check your child's Red Book or contact your GP or practice nurse. If your child has not yet received them, it's not too late, just make an appointment for them to be given as soon as possible – preferably before starting school.

The pre-school vaccinations are:

VACCINE	HOW AND WHEN IT IS GIVEN
Flu (Influenza)	Nasal spray, from aged 2, from October. Given every year in the autumn term.
Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and polio (dTaP/IPV or DTaP/IPV)	One booster injection at 3 years and four months of age
Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)	One booster injection at 3 years and four months of age

Flu vaccination

In previous winters your child may have been offered a flu vaccination by your GP. When they join reception class this autumn, they will continue to be offered the vaccine by your GP. However, once they reach year 1 this will then be offered at school in most areas.

Flu is not just a bad cold. It can be a very unpleasant illness in children causing fever, stuffy nose, dry cough, sore throat, aching muscles and joints, and extreme tiredness. Symptoms can last several days and this usually means children taking time off school for recovery – and for parents, time off work to care for them.

Serious complications of flu include a painful ear infection, bronchitis, and pneumonia and even death. Children with pre-existing health conditions are more vulnerable to the serious effects of flu.

The vaccine is given as a nasal spray, so is a quick and painless way to help protect your child from the effects of the virus each winter. As flu viruses change frequently it is necessary to have the vaccine every year.

By offering the influenza vaccination to as many children as possible, we help to protect them in time for the winter. As well as protecting these vaccinated children, the disease is less able to spread as easily, and so they can help to protect their younger brothers and sisters, and other family members including their parents and grandparents.



Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and polio (dTaP/IPV or DTaP/IPV)

Protection (immunity) against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio can fade over time, but the booster injection offered at 3 years and four months of age will boost the protection your child got as a baby from their first immunisations against these diseases. Thanks to the success of the NHS Childhood Immunisation Programme, diphtheria, tetanus and polio are now rare, but those who are unvaccinated remain susceptible to the diseases, which can be serious and sadly even kill.

In recent years, there has been an increase in cases of pertussis (whooping cough) and the illness can be unpleasant for older children. But it can be very serious, sadly even fatal for babies under one year old who come into contact with the pertussis bacteria since they are too young to have been immunised themselves against the illness. It's important that your child receives their booster dose to protect both themselves and other babies or young children in their families or communities that they come into contact with.

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications. It's now less common in the UK because of the MMR vaccination programme. Measles can be more severe in adulthood and those who are unvaccinated remain susceptible to the disease. MMR vaccination also provides protection against mumps and rubella, which are also highly infectious diseases.

Before a vaccine was available, hundreds of thousands of people in UK caught measles and around a hundred people died each year. But now, the whole community benefits from the herd immunity that the MMR vaccination offers – fewer people get ill and the disease's spread is limited.

It is an exciting time as your child starts their school life! Help them by ensuring they start with the best possible protection against infectious illnesses.