

Let's talk about vaccines

You might be worried about the safety of vaccines for your child. This leaflet can help you make an informed decision about how to protect your child from infection.

Talk to a doctor or nurse

If you are not sure about vaccines, talk to a GP or ask a doctor or nurse at our hospital. We know you want to make the best decision for your child. We'll have a non-judgmental conversation with you about your concerns, so you can decide the best way to protect your child.

Finding trustworthy information

There's a lot of information online about the vaccines that can be confusing, scary and overwhelming. It's hard to know what information you can trust. That's why it's important to:

- check the information comes from an organisation you can trust
- go to official sources like the NHS website or NHS social media channels
- talk to trained healthcare professionals

Why vaccines are important

Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent many infectious diseases. All the current evidence tells us that vaccinating your child is safer than not vaccinating your child.

Out of all the regions in England, London has the lowest vaccine coverage for children up to 5 years old. If enough people are vaccinated, we can get rid of some diseases completely. But if people stop having vaccines, infectious diseases can spread quickly.

Questions you might ask

Do vaccines cause autism?

No. In 1998, a study falsely claimed that the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine caused autism. An investigation found that the author of the study committed fraud and the study was false. Newer research has shown that there is no link between vaccines and autism.

Why not let my child build up natural immunity?

Instead of getting vaccinated, you might think it's better for your child to build up immunity naturally. But to become naturally immune to an infection, your child needs to get infected first. Getting infections comes with serious health risks. Vaccines protect your child from the disease without needing to get infected.

Can multiple vaccines overload my child's immune system?

No. You cannot overload your child's immune system. As your child eats, plays and interacts with the world, they're in contact with millions of germs every day. Their immune system handles all these germs. Getting an injection can be scary and uncomfortable for your child. Getting multiple vaccines in one reduces the number of injections your child needs. It gives your child the best protection while they're young.

Is it safer to wait until my child is older?

No. Younger children are more vulnerable to infections because their immune systems are not fully developed. The sooner they get vaccinated, the sooner their body will be able to protect them from a dangerous infection. Waiting puts your child at risk of getting a serious infection.

Do vaccines cause side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines have some side effects, but they are usually not serious. Common side effects include a high temperature or feeling a bit unwell. Your child might also feel sore where they had the injection. These symptoms usually get better within a few days. You can give your child medicines like paracetamol to help.

Are the ingredients in vaccines harmful?

The main ingredient in vaccines is water. Some vaccines contain a very small amount of a weakened version of the bacteria or virus (“live” vaccines). Other vaccines contain ingredients that make your body think it has come into contact with the bacteria or virus (“non-live” vaccines). All vaccines go through rigorous safety testing before they are given out. The risk of catching a disease from a vaccine is very low.

There are tiny amounts of other ingredients that make the vaccine more effective. Read more about these ingredients on the NHS website, [web www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/why-vaccination-is-important-and-the-safest-way-to-protect-yourself](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/why-vaccination-is-important-and-the-safest-way-to-protect-yourself)

Learn more about vaccines

Talk to a GP or ask a doctor or nurse at our hospital. We'll answer any questions you have about protecting your child against infection. You can also visit these websites.

NHS vaccines and when to have them

The NHS offers free vaccines to protect your child. See the recommended NHS vaccination schedule, [web www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

South East London Integrated Care System – Children’s health

Find out what vaccines your child can get in south east London, [web www.selondonics.org/our-residents/your-health/living-well/childrenshealth](http://www.selondonics.org/our-residents/your-health/living-well/childrenshealth)

Find out about the MMR or MMRV vaccine

There has been a recent increase in measles cases in London. If 95% of children get the MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox) vaccine, we can stop the spread of measles completely.

NHS – MMRV vaccine

Learn about what the MMRV vaccine does, [web www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine)

MMRV vaccine: a guide for parents and carers

Read the GOV.UK guide, [web www.gov.uk/government/publications/mmr-vaccination/mmr-vaccination-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mmr-vaccination/mmr-vaccination-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers)

Lambeth Together – Childhood immunisations in Lambeth

Watch a video about MMR vaccination in Lambeth, [web www.lambethtogether.net/childhood-immunisations](http://www.lambethtogether.net/childhood-immunisations)