



## Your baby's immune system and vaccines

Protect your children. Get all their vaccines on time. The vaccines are free.  
Call your local public health unit or health care provider to make an appointment.

Check what **you know**.

**Answer yes or no to the following sentences about vaccines and the immune system.**

<b>I know</b> why it is important for my baby to get all vaccines on time.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>I know</b> why my child can safely get more than one vaccine at a time.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>I know</b> that getting my baby immunized is the best way to protect them from serious disease.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>I know</b> how the immune system works.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>I know</b> how vaccines work with the immune system.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

**If you have answered 'no' to any of the above, read on to learn more.**

### What is the immune system and how does it work?

You may have heard about viruses and bacteria, often called germs. Some germs that enter your baby's body can make your baby very sick.

From birth, the immune system protects your baby from harmful germs. Your baby's immune system is made of organs and cells that work together to protect them.

Two important parts of the immune system are antibodies and memory cells. Antibodies help kill harmful germs. Memory cells help the immune system respond quickly to an infection and prevent disease.

### How does a vaccine work?

Vaccines help your baby's immune system to make antibodies without your baby getting the disease.

Vaccines also allow your baby's immune system to make memory cells. After vaccines are given, memory cells will protect against harmful germs for a long time. For example, after your child gets the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, they develop memory cells to protect them against these diseases long after their immunization.

### Can my baby get more than one vaccine at a time?

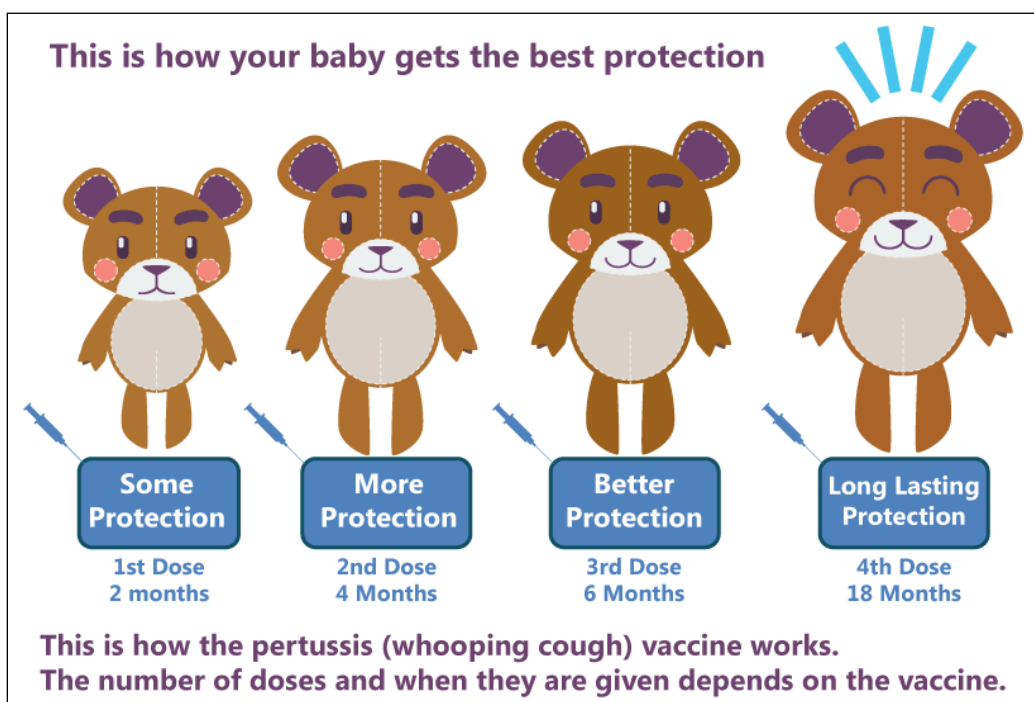
Yes. Your baby's immune system is amazing. Every day from birth, a baby's body defends itself against thousands of germs. Germs are in the air, food, water, and on objects.

Getting more than one vaccine at the same time does not wear out the immune system. Only a very small part of your baby's immune system is used for a short time even when your baby gets several vaccines.

## Why is it important for my baby to get vaccines on time?

Vaccines work best when they are given on time. To protect your baby as soon as possible, your baby should get their vaccines starting at 2 months of age. Most vaccines need to be given as more than 1 dose, or more than once. To ensure the best protection for your baby, the doses are given 1 or

more months apart. For example, whooping cough can be a deadly disease for babies. Babies need their first dose at 2 months of age to begin building protection against whooping cough. They will have full protection in infancy after 3 doses. The 4th dose given at 18 months of age is a booster dose to provide protection to last until your child's next dose at 4-6 years of age.



## For more information

For more information on childhood immunization, see:

- [HealthLinkBC File #50b The benefits of immunizing your child](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50c Childhood vaccines are safe](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50d Childhood Vaccines: What is in the vaccines and why](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50e A better immunization experience for your child](#)



BC Centre for Disease Control  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles) or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.