

## Vaccines for children age 7 to 18 years (The Basics)

[Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate](#)

**What are vaccines?** — Vaccines are treatments used to prevent certain serious or deadly infections. These infections can strike at any time in life. Vaccines work by preparing the body to fight the germs that cause the infections.

Vaccines usually come in shots, but some come in nose sprays or medicines that children swallow. Vaccines are also called “vaccinations” or “immunizations.”

**Why should my child get vaccinated?** — Getting vaccinated can help keep your child from getting sick. If your child does get sick, being vaccinated can keep him or her from getting severely ill. Plus, being vaccinated helps protect the people around your child from getting sick.

**What vaccines do children age 7 to 18 get?** — Doctors recommend that children age 7 to 18 get vaccines to prevent the following infections:

- Inﬂuenza (ﬂu) – The ﬂu can cause fever, chills, muscle aches, cough, or sore throat.
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis – Vaccines to prevent these 3 different diseases are usually grouped together in one shot. Diphtheria can cause a thick covering in the back of the throat that can lead to breathing problems. Tetanus causes the muscles to work abnormally. Pertussis, also called “whooping cough,” can cause a severe cough.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) – HPV infection can lead to cancer of the cervix in women. It can also cause genital warts in men and women. Both girls and boys can get the HPV vaccine.
- Meningococcus – Meningococcus is a germ that can cause a serious body-wide infection of the blood or the tissues around the brain.
- Pneumococcus – Pneumococcus is a germ that can cause infections of the lungs, ears, blood, or tissues around the brain. Most children age 7 to 18 do not need this vaccine. But children who have certain medical conditions might need it.
- Hepatitis A – Hepatitis A does not usually cause problems in children, but it can cause severe liver disease in adults. Children who get the [hepatitis A vaccine](#) help prevent the adults around them from getting the infection. If your child never got this vaccine at a younger age, he or she might need to get it.

Some children will need other vaccines, such as scheduled vaccines they did not get when younger.

**How many vaccine doses does my child need?** — Each vaccine is different. Some vaccines work after just one dose. Others need two or more doses to prevent an infection. Vaccines usually take a few weeks to start working.

Some vaccines prevent an infection for the rest of your life. Others stop working well after some time. A “booster” is a vaccine dose given after a number of years. It reminds the body how to prevent an infection.

**At what ages will my child get vaccines?** — Different vaccines are given at different ages. Most healthy children follow a set vaccine schedule ([table 1](#)). Even though doctors follow a set schedule,

different children can get doses at different times. For example, many girls get the HPV vaccine at age 11 or 12. But they can get it any time from age 9 to 26.

Children might not follow the usual vaccine schedule if they:

- Have certain medical problems
- Started getting their vaccines later than usual
- Started getting their vaccines on time, but then missed doses and fell behind schedule

Your doctor or nurse will recommend a vaccine schedule that is right for your child.

**What side effects can vaccines cause?** — Often, vaccines cause no side effects. When they do cause side effects, they can cause:

- Redness, mild swelling, or soreness where the shot was given
- A mild fever
- A mild rash
- Headache or body aches

Vaccines also sometimes cause more serious side effects, such as severe allergic reactions. But serious side effects are rare.

Ask your doctor or nurse what side effects to expect each time your child gets a vaccine. If your child has a reaction or a problem after a vaccine, let your doctor or nurse know.

**What if my child has an egg allergy?** — If your child has an egg allergy, let your doctor or nurse know. Some vaccines have egg in them because of how they are made. Your doctor or nurse will tell you which vaccines are safe to get.

**Should I keep track of my child's vaccines?** — Yes. It's important to keep a list of the vaccines your child gets and when he or she gets them. Many schools and camps need this information before they let a child in. You can keep your list up to date by bringing it to your check-ups.