

# What you need to know about child vaccinations - Medshield

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[Vaccines](#) are biological substances meant to get the immune system to respond to keep the person from getting sick. When a vaccine is given, the immune system makes antibodies to find the disease-causing pathogen and stop it from making you ill. Such antibodies stay in the body for a while and keep the person from getting sick if exposed to the pathogen again.



The prevalence of many diseases has decreased over the past few decades thanks mainly to the essential paediatric care that includes vaccines (or immunisations) for children. Smallpox has effectively been eradicated thanks to vaccinations, and the prevalence of other diseases has significantly decreased. Despite the vaccines' undeniable advantages, some parents are hesitant to vaccinate their kids, frequently out of fear for their children's safety, effectiveness, or religious convictions. Here are a few answers to frequently asked questions about vaccinations for children.

## What vaccines do doctors suggest for children?

From birth to adolescence, the Department of Health suggests a schedule of vaccinations for children. Vaccines for diseases like hepatitis B, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, and chickenpox are among the ones that are suggested. You can check the Department of Health website or talk to your child's doctor to determine the best vaccines. To view the South African Child Vaccination Schedule, please [click here](#).

## Why is it important for children to get vaccines?

Vaccines are an important way to keep kids from getting sick with dangerous diseases that could kill them. In addition, vaccinations not only protect the actual child but also help protect the rest of society. Vaccines work because they create 'herd immunity'. It means that when enough people are protected against a disease, its spread is slowed or stopped. It saves people who don't have access to or can't get vaccines, like babies, people with specific health problems, and people who are allergic to the vaccine ingredients.

## What are the risks of being vaccinated?

Vaccines can have side effects, just like any other medical treatment. But most of the side effects of vaccines are mild and temporary, like a sore spot where the shot was given, a fever, or a slight rash. Serious side effects are rare, but they can happen. For example, some vaccines have been linked to severe allergic responses in very few cases. It is important to remember that the chance of getting a significant side effect from a vaccine is much lower than the chance of getting a severe illness from the disease the vaccine protects against.

### **Are vaccines safe for children?**

Before they can be used, vaccines go through many tests to ensure they are safe and work well. Clinical trials are used to test the safety and usefulness of vaccines. Thousands of people take part in these trials. The [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting](#) method (VAERS) also tracks vaccines' safety even after being approved. VAERS is a system that compiles reports of adverse effects after getting a vaccine. This information is used to monitor how safe vaccines are and to find any possible safety problems.

### **Can vaccines cause autism?**

There is no solid proof that vaccines cause autism. A 1998 study indicated a link between measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccinations and autism. But this study has been thoroughly debunked, and many scientific studies have not found any link between vaccines and autism.

### **What should parents do if they are still unsure?**

Parents who aren't sure about vaccines should talk to their child's doctor first. They should be honest and open with their doctor about their concerns. Paediatricians, in turn, can help parents understand how safe and effective vaccines are. Parents may also find it helpful to study vaccines from reliable sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization. Ultimately, it's up to the parent to decide whether or not to vaccinate their child, but it's essential to make a choice based on accurate information.

### **LiveAssured that Medshield will cover your child's vaccinations**

The costs of vaccinating your child in South Africa without medical aid can vary depending on the type of vaccine and where the vaccine is administered. There is a government-run vaccination programme known as the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) that provides certain vaccines for free to children under the age of one year. Some public health facilities may charge a fee for administering these vaccines, although the costs are usually nominal. The vaccines provided for free under EPI include:

- BCG (tuberculosis)
- Hepatitis B
- Polio (oral polio vaccine)
- Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTaP)
- Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib)
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV)

However, other vaccines are not covered by the EPI, such as the rotavirus vaccine, the meningococcal vaccine, and the HPV vaccine. These can be obtained through private healthcare providers or clinics, and their costs vary. Without medical aid, the prices of these vaccines can range from a few hundred to a few thousand rands. For example, the rotavirus vaccine can range between R500 to R1,000 per dose, the meningococcal vaccine can cost around R800 per dose, and the HPV vaccine can cost up to R2,000 per dose.

Being a Medshield member means you won't have to worry about covering the cost of these crucial vaccines. Medshield's Wellness Benefits assure that your child will receive their vaccination as and when needed at a healthcare facility of your choice according to your benefit option. Generally, we cover children's vaccinations as part of our preventive care benefits. It includes vaccines that are part of the government's EPI. However, the coverage for non-EPI vaccines may vary

depending on the plan and the specific benefits a member has selected. Members can check their Medshield plan benefits on the website at [www.medshield.co.za](http://www.medshield.co.za), or contact our customer service for more information.

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