

Immunization Facts for Families

Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib)

Updated September 2, 2026

What is *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)? Despite the name, it's not a flu virus! Hib is bacteria that causes many diseases, mostly in children under age 5. Kids with severe Hib infections need to be treated in a hospital.

The Hib vaccine protects your child from:

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Epiglottitis (swelling in the throat), leading to difficulty breathing
- Meningitis (serious brain infection)
- Bloodstream infections
- Heart, joint, and skin infections
- Temporary or permanent hearing loss

Fortunately, the Hib vaccine teaches your child's immune system to resist all these illnesses.

Why should my child receive the Hib vaccine?

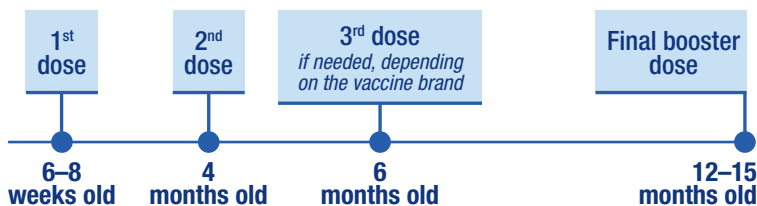
Before the Hib vaccine, about 1 in every 200 young children got very sick from Hib each year. Hib was the main cause of serious brain infections in kids and caused about 1,000 deaths every year. Since the vaccine was first recommended for children in 1985, cases have dropped by over 99%, keeping most kids safe from serious infections.

Who should receive the Hib vaccine and when?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all babies and toddlers get the Hib vaccine to protect them from serious Hib disease.

Children usually get 3 or 4 doses depending on the vaccine brand. It is often given as part of a combination vaccine, which can reduce the number of shots a child receives:

- 1st dose at 6–8 weeks old
- 2nd dose at 4 months old
- 3rd dose at 6 months old (if needed, depending on the vaccine brand)
- Final booster dose between 12 and 15 months old



Starting the Hib vaccine late? Children under age 5 who start the Hib vaccine series late should still get vaccinated.

- The number of doses needed depends on your child's age when they start vaccination and the vaccine brand.
- Children 15 months and older may need only 1 dose.
- Healthy children age 5 years and older who have never received a Hib vaccine usually do not need to be vaccinated.
- Serious Hib infections are most common in babies and children under age 5.

How does Hib spread?

Hib spreads easily from person to person, especially among young children. Even children who seem healthy can have the bacteria in their nose or mouth and pass Hib to others. Hib spreads through:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Close contact like hugging or playing
- Touching contaminated surfaces or toys and then touching the mouth or nose

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

Serious side effects are rare. Side effects are usually mild and go away on their own. Some people may experience redness, swelling or tenderness where they received the vaccine. Some may also experience mild fever, fussiness or tiredness.



Learn more

If you have questions about vaccines and keeping your child healthy, talk with your child's pediatrician. Visit www.healthychildren.org/Hib for more information on Hib vaccine from the AAP.

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