

Q&A

The BCG vaccination

When is the best time for my baby to have a BCG vaccination?

It is best for your baby to have the vaccine **as soon after birth as possible** up to 6 months old, but they can be vaccinated any time up to 5 years.

If your baby is older than 6 months he/she will need to have a Mantoux skin test to see if they have been exposed to TB. We will book this test for your child before they are scheduled to have a vaccination.

I have one child under 6 months old and another older child less than 5 years of age that both need a BCG vaccine. What should I do?

Babies under 6 months can be booked into the next available clinic appointment

Older babies and children over 6 months old require a Mantoux skin test to check if they may already be infected with TB germs. You will receive an appointment time for your child to have a Mantoux skin test 3 days prior to their BCG appointment. At the BCG appointment the Mantoux skin test will be read by the nurse and you will be advised if BCG is still recommended for your child.

We will aim to schedule your under 6 month old baby and your older child to have their vaccines at the same clinic appointment. However we will always try and get the younger baby to have their BCG before 6 months of age - so it depends on how quickly your older child can have the Mantoux skin test done. Sometimes you might need to take the children to two separate appointments.

Can the nurse give my baby their 6 week immunisations at the same time?

Our service is only funded to provide BCG vaccination as part of our TB control programme.

Your baby's 6 week immunisations can be given as scheduled by your own family doctor.

Please note your family doctor's practice nurse cannot administer BCG vaccination for your child - this can only be done by ARPHS public health nurses.

Is there a cost?

The BCG vaccination and clinic appointment (including Mantoux skin testing) are free for any eligible child in the Auckland region.

Is my baby going to be unwell after the vaccination?

No, your baby should remain well following the BCG vaccination.

For BCG vaccine after care information please see the ['BCG Vaccine: After Care for Parents - English Version'](#) on the HealthED website.

Your nurse will discuss common reactions to the vaccine at your appointment.

Can my baby be vaccinated if he/she is unwell?

If your baby has a fever on the day of the clinic appointment we will not vaccinate your baby - please contact us before the clinic to save you having to travel to clinic and to be declined a vaccine. Another appointment will be booked with you.

I'm taking my child to a country for more than 3 months where TB is common. How far in advance do I need to vaccinate?

Your child should start producing protective antibodies within the first 1- 2 weeks of vaccine administration. They are considered 'protected' after 4 weeks from vaccine administration.

We recommend that you avoid your child visiting or coming into contact with people who are sick, coughing or unwell with fevers.

Why can't I have my child over 5 vaccinated?

Only children under 5 years old are eligible for BCG vaccination in New Zealand. Children under 5 years are more at risk of developing serious complications from TB.

Can I pay to have my child or myself vaccinated even if we're not eligible?

No.

My child has missed out while the vaccine was out of stock. When can they be vaccinated?

If they are under 5 years old, visit the BCG page on the ARPHS website (www.arphs.govt.nz/bcg) and follow the instructions for completing an assessment form.

We are going on holiday for a fortnight to a country where TB is common. Are they at risk and can they be vaccinated?

No they do not need to be vaccinated. Children at risk of developing TB require prolonged exposure over time. We recommend vaccinating in this situation **only** if your child will be in that country for 3 months or more.

We recommend that you avoid your child visiting or coming into contact with people who are sick, coughing or unwell with fevers.

Will there be a waiting list and how long will I have to wait to be seen?

As demand for the BCG vaccine increases, we may have a waiting list. In the past the wait time was no longer than 4-8 weeks although we will not be able to guarantee this. We will always try to book a child in at the next available clinic although they may need to wait for a Mantoux skin test clinic appointment first.

How long will the BCG vaccine protective effect last?

The protective effect of this vaccine normally lasts 10-15 years.

My child has pre-existing medical conditions/concerns. Will it be okay for them to receive the BCG vaccine?

In most cases the vaccine can still be administered, but it is withheld in certain conditions or situations. Our nurses will ask for a medical history at the clinic and inform you if your child can receive the vaccine or not.

If you have any concerns, please call the BCG service on 0800 FOR BCG (0800 367 224) to discuss.

Is there a 'catch up' programme for those children who have missed out on the BCG vaccination?

We encourage parents whose children have missed out on a BCG vaccination, and are still under 5 years, to go to the BCG website and fill out the online contact form for an appointment.

We will not, however, be actively identifying and contacting eligible children from the last two years.

My child is over 5 now but was under 5 when the BCG was unavailable. Is my child able to have a BCG vaccination?

Your child is now considered at low risk, so is no longer eligible for the vaccine.

My child will be 5 in a month's time. Are they able to have a BCG?

The priority is to vaccinate babies under six months as they are the most vulnerable.

Auckland Regional Public Health Service
Ratonga Hauora-ā-Iwi ō Tāmaki Makaurau



Working with the people of Auckland, Waitemata and Counties Manukau