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Hib/MenC vaccine (Haemophilus influenzae type B and meningococcal group C)

The Hib/MenC vaccination is a single vaccine designed to protect against two serious infections: *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib) and *Neisseria meningitidis* group C (MenC for short).

Both of these infections can cause fatal diseases including meningitis.

What is Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type B)?

Hib is a bacterial infection that can cause various life-threatening conditions, including **meningitis**, **sepsis**, and **pneumonia**.

Vaccination programmes have made Hib extremely rare in developed countries. But it is more common where vaccination rates are lower.

What is meningococcal group C infection?

MenC is one of several types of meningococcal bacterial infections. It is **extremely dangerous**.

MenC infection can cause serious illnesses, including:

- **meningitis** and
- **sepsis** (a dangerously extreme reaction in the body to an infection).

The most well-known of these conditions among parents is probably meningitis. **Meningitis** is inflammation (swelling) of the tissues that protect the brain and spinal cord. These tissues are called the meninges.

This type of infection is not always caused by bacteria. Meningitis can also be caused by infection with a virus or, rarely, a fungus. But these types of infection are usually less serious.

Meningitis can sometimes be fatal. And people who recover are often affected for the rest of their lives. Long-term problems caused by meningitis can include:

- severe brain damage
- hearing or vision problems
- epilepsy
- problems with memory and concentration
- problems with movement and balance, and
- needing to have limbs amputated.

Who needs the Hib/MenC vaccine?

Vaccination schedules might vary slightly depending on where you live. In some countries, children might be offered:

- a slightly different vaccine
- vaccination at a different age, or
- separate vaccinations against these two infections.

For example, in the UK, the Hib/Men C vaccine is offered to babies at the age of **12 months**.

The MenC part of the vaccine used to be offered to babies in the UK at a younger age. But levels of MenC infection are low enough that younger children are protected by 'herd immunity'.

This means that so many people have been vaccinated that it's hard for the infection to spread.

The Hib/MenC vaccine at 12 months:

- boosts the protection given by the Hib vaccine offered to young babies as part of the **6-in-1 vaccine** (for more information, see our leaflet *6-in-1 vaccine*)
- gives children their first dose of MenC protection. Young people are offered a booster against MenC as teenagers as part of the **MenACWY vaccine**, which is designed to protect against four strains of meningococcal disease. For more information see our leaflet *MenACWY vaccine*).

Is there anyone who shouldn't have the vaccine?

Your baby should not have the vaccine if he or she:

- has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine, or
- is allergic to any of the vaccine's ingredients. Tell the medical staff giving the vaccine about any **allergies** your baby has before he or she has the vaccine.

Severe allergic reactions can very rarely happen with this vaccine. But the medical staff will be trained in how to treat this.

Is it safe?

The Hib/MenC vaccine is very safe. It's also safe for your baby to have it at the same time as other vaccines.

Like all vaccines, the Hib/MenC vaccine can cause side effects in some babies. Common side effects that can affect your baby for a short time after having this vaccine include:

- pain, redness, or swelling where the injection is given (called the injection site)
- a fever
- being irritable
- loss of appetite, and
- being more sleepy than usual.

Some babies also vomit or have diarrhoea after this vaccination. But this is less common.

If your baby has a **rash** after having the vaccine, call your doctor right away. This could be a sign of an allergic reaction.

How is the vaccination given?

Vaccines in babies are usually given as an injection in the thigh. But if your baby is having several vaccinations at once, they will have them in different places.

This might mean that your baby has injections in the upper arms as well as in the thighs.

How well does the vaccine work?

The evidence suggests that the vaccine works very well. For example, in the UK, meningitis is now extremely rare because of the vaccination programme.

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