

Resumption of Hib Booster Vaccination: Q & A for Parents:

1. What are a “primary vaccination” and a “booster dose”?

A. For most vaccines, more than one dose is needed for full protection. This typically requires 2 or 3 doses of vaccine administered during the first year (“the primary series”) and a booster dose administered months later usually some time after the first birthday. Each of the first doses in a primary series provides some protection. The first doses “prime” or prepare the immune system to develop stronger and stronger immunity as each dose of vaccine is received. The final dose, given months after the primary series is called the “booster” because it is needed to boost protection to a high, long-lasting level.

Depending on which brand of Hib vaccine your doctor uses, the primary doses are given at 2 and 4 months of age or at 2, 4 and 6 months of age. For Hib vaccine, by age 12 through 15 months, it's time for a booster dose.

2. I heard about some cases of Hib disease were very serious. So why is it OK to wait until the next time I take my baby/child in for some other reason to get the Hib booster? Shouldn't I make an appointment right away?

A. Even though supplies are increasing, there is currently not enough vaccine for every child who needs a booster dose. If your child already received the "primary series" of Hib vaccine as an infant, then he/she already has protection, but the level of protection could fade over time. The booster does is needed to make sure that your child has the highest possible level of protection.

3. Why was there a shortage of Hib vaccine and why is the shortage now getting better?

A. The shortage occurred because one of the two manufacturers of this vaccine temporarily could not make Hib vaccine. The one remaining manufacturer of Hib vaccine is now making more Hib vaccine, allowing children to receive the booster dose at 12 through 15 months of age.

4. Is the Hib vaccine safe?

A. Yes. The Hib vaccine used today is technically known as Hib conjugate vaccine, and it is a very safe vaccine, as are all vaccines recommended to be given to children in this country. To assure that vaccines are safe, they must be licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA only licenses vaccines after studies show that they are safe. After vaccines are licensed, the

FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitor their use, including any reports of side effects. Hib conjugate vaccines have been used extensively in this country and around the world for more than 10 years, and during this time, these vaccines have proven to be as safe as the first testing indicated they would be. Hib vaccines have been given to millions of children.

Reactions following Hib conjugate vaccines are uncommon. Local swelling, redness, or pain at the site of injection has been reported in 5%-30% of children receiving Hib vaccine. Serious adverse reactions are extremely rare.

5. What is Hib disease?

A. Hib disease is a serious infection caused by a bacteria (*Haemophilus influenzae* type b). Before Hib vaccine, Hib disease was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis among children under 5 years old. Meningitis is an infection of the brain and spinal cord coverings which can lead to lasting brain damage and deafness. Hib disease can also cause pneumonia, severe swelling of the throat, infection of the blood, joints, bones, and covering of the heart, and can lead to death. Hib vaccine can prevent Hib disease.