Key Facts about Childhood Immunisation for Parents & Professionals

- The routine childhood immunisation schedule involves **five appointments from age 8 weeks to 3 years 4 months** at a GP surgery, usually with the practice nurse.
- Having all the vaccines offered protects children against **13 different serious diseases**.
- All the vaccinations in the childhood schedule are **free**.
- If a baby, child, or an adult has missed any immunisations it is **never too late to catch up**. Contact a health professional for advice.
- The vaccines we use in the UK are also **used in over 100 countries** around the world and have been **shown to be safe and effective**.
- Global immunisation efforts have saved at least **154 million lives** over the past 50 years.
- Immunisation is the **most effective way to protect children** against some very serious diseases.
- The reason we rarely hear about children getting vaccine preventable diseases e.g. measles, polio, mumps, diphtheria is because **vaccines have been so effective**.
- If you are **not vaccinated** against a disease, you are **not protected** from it.
- If one person gets an infectious disease, it can **spread quickly** through all the unvaccinated people.
- Leaving your child unvaccinated does leave them **at risk** of having very unpleasant illnesses that can have very serious consequences.
- Some vaccines work after **one dose**, but others need **more doses** to be effective, and for some you need a **booster** later to maintain your immunity which can lessen over time.
- Religious concerns - talk to a health professional. There are **alternatives to the porcine component** found in some vaccines (MMR & nasal influenza)
- **Allergy concerns** – e.g. egg, peanut or antibiotic allergy, eczema & asthma. **Talk to a health professional** to reassure yourself and ensure your child is offered the best protection.
- Outbreaks of disease have **economic** implications e.g. time off school/work, additional childcare, closure of schools/workplaces.

MMR (Measles Mumps & Rubella)

Measles can make children **seriously unwell** with **one in five needing a hospital visit. One in 15 children develop serious complications** from a measles infection, which can include meningitis and blindness. It is also highly infectious – just one person with measles can infect nine out of ten people who have not had the MMR vaccination.

- The first vaccine dose is given at 13 months and the second at 3 years 4 months of age.
- **Two doses** of the MMR vaccine provide the best protection.
  After 2 doses:
  - around 99% of people will be protected against measles & rubella
  - around 88% of people will be protected against mumps
- Protection starts within 2 weeks of having the MMR vaccine
- People who are vaccinated against mumps, but still catch it, are less likely to have serious complications or be admitted to hospital.

Gelatine

Gelatine is used as a stabiliser in some medicines and vaccines.

- In the UK, we have 2 MMR vaccines. One contains gelatine, the other doesn't. **You can request the vaccine that does not contain pork gelatine** by talking to your practice nurse or GP.
- The nasal spray that protects children against flu also contains porcine gelatine. There is no equivalent nasal vaccine but an injectable alternative.

Vaccines and porcine gelatine (publishing.service.gov.uk) in Arabic, Bengali & Urdu

BCG

The BCG vaccine, which gives protection against tuberculosis (TB) infection is not routinely given as part of the NHS childhood immunisation schedule.

- A midwife, health visitor or GP will be able to advise if a baby/child requires a BCG.

It is recommended that a baby has the BCG vaccine if any of the following apply:

- they live in an area of the UK where there is a higher risk of getting TB
- they have a parent or grandparent born in a country where there is a higher risk of getting TB

- they'll be going to live or stay in a country where there is a higher risk of getting TB
- they have been living with, or in regular close contact with, someone who has or had TB

If a baby needs the vaccine, it will usually be given at around 28 days old.

Egg Allergy

There are 2 vaccines in the UK routine schedule that contain small amounts of egg protein:

- the flu vaccine – which is grown on hens' eggs. It can potentially trigger an allergic reaction in people with an egg allergy
- the MMR vaccine – which is grown on cells from chick embryos, which is not the same as hens' eggs. This means it does not trigger an allergic reaction

Children and adults with a severe egg allergy can safely receive the MMR vaccine.

Children and adults with an egg allergy are advised to have either:

- an egg-free inactivated flu vaccine
- a vaccine with a very low egg protein (ovalbumin) content

The **live nasal spray flu vaccine** given to children has a very low egg protein content. It **can be safely given to children with an egg allergy**.

Children and adults who have previously had a very severe allergic reaction to eggs may be advised to have their flu vaccine in a hospital.