



Mae Brechu yn achub bywydau
Vaccination saves lives



BCG vaccine
**for babies
and children**



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This leaflet is about the BCG vaccination that is being offered to protect your child against tuberculosis.

What is the BCG vaccine?

The BCG vaccine contains a weakened form of the bacteria (germ) that cause tuberculosis (TB). The vaccine doesn't cause TB, but it helps your child develop protection (immunity) against it in case they ever come into contact with it. The BCG vaccination is particularly effective in protecting babies and young children against the more rare and severe forms of TB, such as TB meningitis (swelling of the protective coverings around the brain).

Why is my child being offered the BCG vaccine?

The BCG vaccine is offered to babies and young children who are more likely to come into contact with someone with TB. This is because they either live in an area with high rates of TB, or their parents or grandparents came from a country with high rates of TB. Cases of TB can be found all over the world, including in South-East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and some countries in Eastern Europe.

For a list of countries with high rates of TB visit: www.gov.uk/government/publications/tuberculosis-tb-by-country-rates-per-100000-people.

If you are not sure whether your child is likely to come into contact with anyone who has had TB, talk to a health professional. With increasing numbers of people travelling around the world, the risk of people coming into contact with the disease also increases.



What is TB?

TB is a serious disease that usually affects the lungs but can affect any part of the body. TB often develops slowly, and it can take several months for symptoms to appear. Most people in this country recover fully after treatment, but this usually takes several months.

How is TB spread?

TB is usually spread when people with infectious TB in their lungs or throat cough or sneeze. However, it usually needs close contact with an infectious person over a long time to catch the disease. Not everyone with TB in their lungs is infectious. Once they are taking the right treatment, most people will stop being infectious after about two weeks.

What are the symptoms of TB?

The symptoms of TB can vary depending on which part of the body is affected. Also, the signs of disease in a baby may be different from those in an adult or child. Babies may have very general symptoms such as being extremely tired, not eating well and failing to gain weight. As TB that affects the lungs is infectious, it is important that you are aware of the symptoms that babies, older children and adults could have.

You should contact a doctor if you, your child, any other member of your family or a friend has any of the following:

A persistent cough that lasts for more than three weeks



A fever



Heavy sweating at night



Loss of appetite



Being very tired



Coughing up blood



Unexplained weight loss or, for babies and children, failure to gain weight appropriately for their age



All of these symptoms may also be caused by other problems.

How common is TB?

TB is much less common in the UK than it was, but the number of cases has been rising since 1990. In Wales, TB is still a fairly uncommon condition, with around 100 cases diagnosed each year.

How is my child immunised?

Your child will be given the BCG injection in the upper part of their left arm.

The vaccination is usually offered soon after birth while your baby is still in hospital, but it can be given at any time in a specialist clinic.

Are there any side effects from the vaccine?

Immediately after the injection, a raised blister will appear. Within two to six weeks a small spot will appear and may weep or ooze. It is completely normal for this to happen. Leave it open to the air, do not squeeze it and try not to dislodge any scab that may have formed. Occasionally, you may need to protect the sore area with a dry dressing. You can wash and bath your child and take them swimming as normal. The sore may take several months to heal completely, and a small scar is likely to remain.



If you are worried or you think the sore has become infected, see your doctor.

Are there any reasons why my child should not have the BCG vaccination?

As with most other immunisations, the injection may not be given or should be delayed if your baby:

- has a high fever; or
- is suffering from a generalised skin condition. (If they have eczema, the nurse or doctor will choose an injection site that is not inflamed, cracked or sore.)

Rarely, in children who have weakened immune systems, the bacteria in the vaccine can cause serious infection. It is very important that you tell the nurse or doctor if your child has, or is suspected of having, a weakened immune system.

For example:

- your child is having treatment for cancer or another serious condition;
- the mother had immunosuppressive biological therapy while pregnant;
- there is a family history of problems with the immune system (for example, HIV or severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID)); or
- they have (or might have) SCID.

Do I need to know anything else?

Your baby should start their routine immunisations at two months of age, regardless of when they have their BCG vaccination. You should make sure that your child is not given another injection in the same arm as the BCG for at least three months afterwards (otherwise the glands in that area may swell).

It is important to make sure that there is a record of the BCG vaccination in your child's Personal Child Health Record (red book).

If you answer **'Yes'** to any of the following questions, you should ask your doctor or nurse about a BCG vaccine for your child.

- Is your child, one of their parents or a grandparent from a country with high rates of TB? (If you're not sure, talk to a health professional.)
- Has your child lived for more than three months in a country with high rates of TB, or are they likely to?
- Has anyone in your household, or anyone else who is likely to have prolonged contact with your child, got TB, had TB in the past, or come from a country with high rates of TB?



Remember, treating TB takes a long time - preventing it is much easier.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or want more information, you can visit **111.wales.nhs.uk**, talk to your doctor or nurse or call **NHS 111 Wales**.

If **111** is not available in your area, please call **0845 46 47**. Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute (plus your telephone provider's usual charge).

A schedule showing which immunisations are routinely offered in Wales is available from: **111.wales.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Vaccinations**

You can find out more about the BCG vaccine and possible side effects at: **medicines.org.uk/emc/product/9890/smpc**

You can contact the charity TB Alert on **020 8969 4830** or email: **contact@tbalert.org**

To find out how the NHS uses your information, visit: **111.wales.nhs.uk/lifestylewellbeing/yourinfoyourrights**

To order more copies of this leaflet, visit: **publichealthwales.org/HealthInformationResources**



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