

Vaccination

- The vaccination is quite simple. A single injection with a small amount of BCG vaccine is given just under the skin on the upper left arm.
- Vaccination produces little discomfort. The reactions after vaccination are usually mild but it is common to have a pimple, which may turn into a small ulcer that discharges fluid for several days. This is normal and requires no treatment, except perhaps a small dry dressing until it heals. If the child is going swimming, a water-proof cover is advisable, but this is not necessary for normal baths.
- The health visitor will check the baby for success of the vaccination during routine visits.

- If you want more information on TB, the BCG vaccine or any other matter, speak to the health visitor or your own doctor or nurse.



St. Bernards Hospital
Maternity: 20051297

Primary Care Centre
Health Visitors: 20072945
Immunisation Dept: 20078039

**Remember, prevention is simple,
but treating TB can take a long time.**



The Gibraltar Health Authority
St. Bernard's Hospital
Harbour Views Road
Gibraltar

BCG and your baby

Protect your babies against TB



immunisation

THE SAFEST WAY TO PROTECT
YOUR CHILD



This leaflet is about a vaccination called BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin) that is commonly taken to protect against a serious disease called (tuberculosis) TB. The vaccine is given as an injection.

■ **What is TB?**

TB is an infection caused by germs (bacteria) called Mycobacteria that usually affect the lungs. The disease can also affect other parts of the body such as the glands, brain and bones. It usually produces symptoms like a cough (which can last for weeks), fever, night sweating, weight loss, feeling tired and coughing up blood. With treatment, it is possible to make a full recovery from the disease.

■ **How can you catch TB?**

You generally catch TB from someone who is already infected - usually someone who has the infection in their lungs and who is coughing. Coughing produces tiny drops of spit which contain germs (bacteria). These germs can stay in the air for long periods of time and, if you breathe them in they can cause the infection. As a general rule, TB is spread only after quite close and long contact with an infectious person, such as from living in the same house as someone who has the disease.



■ **Do a lot of people catch TB?**
In some parts of the world, TB is very common and increasing. Worldwide, TB kills around 1 million people every year. As more and more people travel around the world, they can come into contact with the disease or bring the disease into this country. University students who live in crowded accommodation may be exposed to risk of infection. Although TB is no longer common in the UK, since the early 1990s the number of cases has risen to around 9000 a year. In Gibraltar we see 2 to 3 cases every year.

■ **What is the BCG vaccine?**
An injection of the BCG vaccine contains a very weak form of the same germ. Because it is weakened the vaccine doesn't cause TB but it helps the body to start building protection (immunity) against the disease.

■ **Does it work?**
The best time to immunise is soon after birth. The BCG vaccine works best the sooner it is given. If a baby receives the BCG vaccine soon after birth, protection is almost 100% and reactions are minimal. After the age of 3 years, the effectiveness falls and side effects increase. Furthermore, children over 6 years of age require a special skin test to make sure that they will not get severe reactions. In some places (including many parts of the UK), vaccinations are given to high school children, but this is much less effective and for many children it is too late because they fail the skin test.

■ **Gibraltar Neonatal Immunisation Programme**
All infants born in Gibraltar are offered the BCG vaccine shortly after birth. Expectant mothers can learn about the vaccine and the BCG programme during their pregnancy from health staff.

Vaccination is also available to older children up to their third birthday, but this will be at the request of the parents. Children older than 3 years will not be eligible for BCG vaccination, unless they are referred by a doctor who must make sure the child has not been exposed to TB.

