

# The truth about childhood vaccines (shots)

Members of Aetna Better Health® of New Jersey no cost for childhood vaccines.



Some people have concerns about giving their kids shots, but childhood vaccines help prevent major health problems, such as infertility, diarrheal infections, muscle paralysis, brain damage, blindness, deafness and cancer.

## How vaccines work

- Vaccines help the body learn how to defend itself from disease without the dangers of a full-blown infection.
- They imitate an infection to activate the immune system.
- The active ingredient in all vaccines is an antigen, which causes the immune system to begin producing antibodies to fight infection. There are different types of antigens:
  - Weakened or killed bacteria or viruses
  - Bits of their exterior surface or genetic material, or
  - Bacterial toxin treated to make it non-toxic.
- Side effects are a normal part of how vaccines work. Your child may get a low fever or body aches. This is just evidence that the shot—and your child’s body—are both doing their jobs.

## Childhood vaccines are tested and safe\*

- Vaccines typically take many years of research, testing, and monitoring before approval. .
- After lab tests, it must go through years of clinical trials on diverse groups of people. The FDA then approves the vaccine after reviewing the results.
- Even after it is approved, the FDA continues to monitor it.

### It is better to prevent diseases than to treat them.

- Vaccines have greatly reduced or eliminated 16 of the worst diseases that affect children.
- When most people in the community are immune to a disease, it is less likely for that disease to spread. If people skip vaccines, diseases can spread much more quickly.

\*Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Developing Safe & Effective Vaccines. 8/9/24. [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov). Accessed 7/25/2025.

## We're here for you

[AetnaBetterHealth.com/NewJersey](https://www.aetna.com/betterhealth/newjersey)

1-855-232-3596 (TTY: 711)

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Aetna Better Health®  
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This chart shows what vaccines are needed and when. Each dose is based on the age a child's immune system provides the best protection after the shot, as well as when the child is at highest risk for a disease. Talk with your health care provider about vaccines for your child.

|          | Birth  | 1 month | 2 months | 4 months | 6 months | 9 months | 12 months | 15 months | 18 months | 19-23 months | 2-3 years | 4-6 years       | 11-12 years | 13-15 years | 16 years | 17-18 years |  |
|----------|--|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-------------|--|
| COVID-19 | Vaccination based on shared clinical decision-making |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| DTaP     |  |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3   |          |           | Dose 4    |           |              |           | Dose 5          |             |             |          |             |  |
| Flu      | 1-2 doses annually                                   |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           | 1 dose annually |             |             |          |             |  |
| HepA     | 2 dose series, 6 months apart                        |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| HepB     | Dose 1   | Dose 2  |          |          | Dose 3   |          |           |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| Hib      |  |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   |          |          | Dose 3    |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| HPV      |  |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           |                 | See notes*  |             |          |             |  |
| IPV      |  |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3   |          |           |           |           |              |           | Dose 4          |             |             |          |             |  |
| Men-ACWY |  |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           | Dose 1          |             |             | Dose 2   |             |  |
| MMR      |  |         |          |          |          |          | Dose 1    |           |           |              |           | Dose 2          |             |             |          |             |  |
| PCV      |  |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3   |          | Dose 4    |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| RSV      | Dose 1   |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| RV       |  |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   |          |          |           |           |           |              |           |                 |             |             |          |             |  |
| Tdap     |  |         |          |          |          |          |           |           |           |              |           | Dose 1          |             |             |          |             |  |
| VAR      |  |         |          |          |          |          | Dose 1    |           |           |              |           | Dose 2          |             |             |          |             |  |

Source: CDC. "Vaccine Schedules." 11/22/24 [cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-schedules](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-schedules)

\* HPV vaccination routinely recommended at **age 11-12 years (can start at age 9 years)** and catch-up HPV vaccination recommended for all persons through age 18 years if not adequately vaccinated.

† RSV protection now includes maternal RSV vaccination during pregnancy or infant immunization with monoclonal antibody (nirsevimab).

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