

Protect for Life

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect your child from fatal infections and diseases.

– Prof Dr Zulkifli Ismail, Consultant Paediatrician

Before the age of modern medicine, infectious outbreaks were common and often resulted in death. People lived in dirty conditions, where germs spread easily. No one knew how to prevent, much less treat these diseases.

Today, we have the advantage of vaccines, a scientific discovery that has saved millions of lives. Yet, some parents remain skeptical, leaving their children to pay the deadly price.

DEFENDING AGAINST DISEASES

Your child's body is designed to produce cells and antibodies that can combat viruses and bacteria. An attack by these viruses or bacteria will produce a complex immunological 'memory', which is what gives your child immunity against future invasions by the same germs.

However, there are certain types of germs that the body cannot protect itself against, without the help of vaccines. These germs include bacteria that cause tuberculosis (TB), diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and meningitis, as well as viruses that cause hepatitis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox. Without vaccination, these germs could wreak havoc on your child's body, causing disability, even death.

HAVE YOUR CHILD VACCINATED

There are currently six types of vaccines recommended by the Ministry of Health Malaysia to protect your child. Your child will receive his first vaccination at birth, and should continue receiving all the other doses of these vaccines, following the recommended schedule (please see table below).

Apart from the mandatory vaccines, optional vaccines are also available to protect him against other diseases, such as chicken pox, Hepatitis A and Japanese encephalitis (JE).

RECOMMENDED VACCINATION SCHEDULE / JADUAL VAKSIN YANG DISARANKAN												
	AGE (MONTHS) / UMUR (BULAN)									AGE (YEARS) / UMUR (TAHUN)		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	12	18	Std / Drj 1	Std / Drj 6	Form / Tite 3
BCG (Tuberculosis)												
Hepatitis B												
DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis)										Diphtheria & Tetanus		Tetanus
Polio												
Hib (Haemophilus influenzae B)												
MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella / Demam, Campak, Beguk, Rubella)												
Measles (in Sabah only) / Demam campak (di Sabah sahaja)												

What's stopping you?

There are some parents who do not take their children for vaccinations. Some hold fast to misconceptions, while others merely make excuses.

The Malaysian Paediatric Association (MPA) takes a look at some of the common beliefs.

Belief #1: "These diseases don't even occur anymore."

Fact: You would be surprised. Bacteria and viruses have survived alongside generations of humans. Some of these germs prevail in less than hygienic conditions, which still exist in Malaysia. Your child is still at risk of contracting these infectious diseases from other people and from the environment.

Belief #2: "Vaccination is not safe."

Fact: Cases of serious adverse effects associated with vaccinations are extremely rare. Vaccination may cause mild reactions or side effects to some children. On the other hand, an infection would be devastating to your child, as well as costly to treat. The benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risks and temporary discomforts that may arise.

Belief #3: "Why vaccinate when doctor can treat?"

Fact: There is currently no effective or specific treatment for many of these diseases. There are hardly any drugs to successfully combat the viral diseases. When complications arise, there is little left except to put the children on supportive treatment that can be unpleasant and expensive. Antibiotics are administered for bacterial infections, but may need to be prolonged. At times, treatment may not be able to prevent severe complications (like heart or brain damage, or muscular paralysis) from occurring. Other times, treatment may be too late.

Belief #4: “My child has a cold”

Fact: A mild runny nose is not a contraindication to vaccination. If the child has a fever, it may be wise to defer the vaccine. Oral polio vaccine may be given later if baby has diarrhoea.

Belief #5: “I don’t have time!”

Fact: All it requires is a trip to the clinic/hospital every month or every two months. Your employers and colleagues will understand if you need to take time off. Your child’s life is a priority