

Immunisation is unquestionably the right choice for health, and it is essential for families to make this decision with the utmost conviction and peace of mind.

Unfortunately, much groundless information is disseminated about contraindications or hazards. To clarify the issue, the Lombardy Regional Administration has decided to provide an additional service by creating the Wikivaccini portal and app, both of which offer a wealth of information and details.

Wikivaccini.com is the website you need to visit for answers from experts on immunisation-related topics, and where experts share their knowledge using words we all understand.

Stay informed, stay safe!

Giulio Gallera
Regional Minister for Welfare



Find out more
on the website

wikivaccini.com



Vaccines. Stay informed, stay safe.



Wiki
vaccini



10 answers to 10 questions

1 What are vaccines and what do they contain?

Vaccines are a globally acknowledged prevention tool against infectious diseases. **Their action is based on stimulating the body's immune system to defend itself against the germ that causes the onset of a certain diseases.** Vaccines are made of the very pathogens that are inactivated in the lab. Hence, they lose their capacity to cause disease but preserve the ability to generate a response in our body that produces specific antibodies against these infections.

2 Why is immunisation necessary?

Because, **besides protecting the individual, vaccines limit the dissemination of infectious diseases in a community.** Hence, they can also protect people who have not been directly vaccinated. A large number of vaccinated people will reduce the circulation of the germ that causes the disease and, therefore, fewer people will develop the disease. Many infectious diseases have now been eradicated by the widespread use of vaccines.

3 What diseases can vaccines prevent?

Vaccines can prevent important diseases, like diphtheria; hepatitis A; hepatitis B; *Herpes zoster*; influenza; invasive bacterial diseases (meningitis, sepsis, pneumonia); measles; tumours and diseases caused by *Human Papilloma Virus*; mumps; whooping cough; poliomyelitis; German measles; childhood diarrhoea caused by *rotavirus*; tetanus; chickenpox.

4 Who needs immunisation?

Despite being mostly intended for infancy and adolescence, vaccines can be indicated at any age. **They are strongly recommended for all subjects who belong to the so-called "risk categories"**, precisely those who are either

potentially or actually weak. Age, status of health (present or past diseases, therapies), and type of occupation can expose us to a greater extent to the risk of getting a certain infectious disease or of developing its complicated form.

5 Why is immunisation required already during the early months of life?

Babies are immunised from the second month of life to ensure optimal and early protection against infectious diseases. **The immune system is sufficiently developed already at that age** to effectively respond to the vaccine. Conversely, any delay in immunising babies increases the risk of exposure to infections.

6 Is immunisation mandatory or optional? ...It is recommended!

The division of vaccines into mandatory and optional has been inherited from the past. Vaccines that have been recently added to the immunisation calendar are not mandatory by law. **Today "recommended vaccines" is the usual term.** Indeed, of all available vaccines, some are recommended consistently with the indications of the World Health Organization and of the Ministry of Health because their high prevention capacity both for the individual and for the community is widely acknowledged. Lombardy's regional immunisation plan refers to these indications.

7 Can vaccines have side effects?

Generally no significant side effects have been recorded after immunisation. When they occur, they are especially mild and transient. In some cases, within one or two days after immunisation, the person develops mild fever and inflammatory reactions at the injection site. These reactions usually have a short duration. **The onset of more serious symptoms (allergic symptoms) is very rare.** They usually manifest either immediately or a few minutes after administration of the vaccine. This is why after immunisation the person is requested to remain in the clinic's waiting room for about 20 minutes. The healthcare staff is trained to manage these reactions and has all the equipment required.

8 Can any adverse reactions to vaccines be predicted?

There are no lab tests that can either predict or prevent adverse reactions subsequent to the administration of vaccines. The general practitioner and staff at immunisation clinics can, however, identify in advance situations that contraindicate immunisation either temporarily or forever or, anyhow, situations that require caution when starting or continuing immunisation.

9 How is the immunisation cycle activated?

Vaccines are administered in immunisation clinics of the Regional Healthcare System. For childhood immunisation, **the appointment for the first vaccine is communicated to parents with a letter sent by surface mail**, along with a pamphlet providing information about vaccines and their schedule. Before commencing, the healthcare staff have an interview with the parents, following which adherence with the immunisation plan is signed. Vaccines intended for "risk categories" are proposed by the general practitioner and administered either by the doctor or at an immunisation clinic, as for instance during the influenza campaign.

10 Vaccines: where can I find information about them?

For information about vaccines **it is important to refer to institutional sources, which are safe** and guarantee scientifically validated data. **Beware of sources that are not based on science or that misinterpret scientific data.** **A list of useful websites can be found online on the website Wikivaccini.com**

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