

Bacille Calmette-Guerin Information

What is the BCG vaccine?

The Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine is a live vaccine with weakened germs which helps protect against tuberculosis (TB) disease. The vaccine is about 50% effective in preventing TB disease particularly in children 5 years of age and under where it protects against life threatening disease. The benefit to adolescents and adults is less clear. It may take 6 to 12 weeks for the immune response to occur.

Who does SA Health Offer BCG Vaccination to?

BCG can be provided by SA Health to children 5 years of age and under who:

- > Will live for 3 months or more prior to the age of 5 in countries where TB is common
- > Are born to parents with leprosy or a family history of leprosy

When should BCG vaccine not be given?

- > If you have TB disease now, or if you have had TB disease in the past
- > If you have ever had an abnormal tuberculin skin test (TST) reaction or positive Interferon Gamma Release Assay (IGRA) blood test
- > If you have HIV infection or belong to a HIV risk group
- > If you have ever had a serious illness such as leukaemia, kidney disease, cancer, SLE
- > If you take anti-cancer or steroid drugs such as cortisone or immunosuppressive drugs
- > If you are pregnant

When should BCG vaccination be delayed?

- > If you have had another 'live vaccine' within 4 weeks (Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR), yellow fever, Varicella (chicken pox), or shingles)
- > If you have a fever (>38°C)
- > If you suffer from a widespread skin problem such as eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis

How is the BCG vaccine given?

The solution is injected between the layers of skin (usually on the left upper arm).

What are the side effects?

The most common side effects are pain, redness and swelling around the injection site, swelling of the glands in the armpit and/or neck which usually get better without treatment.

Rare side effects are an abscess at the site of injection, bone infection, severe allergic reactions, serious infection that spreads to other parts of the body (estimated risk 3 per million) or death (estimated risk less than 1 in 10 million).

Serious infection or death may occur in people with low immunity including those who are HIV positive, malnourished or have a serious medical condition.

Planning for BCG Vaccination

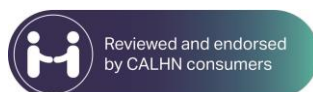
Please note that vaccination availability with SA TB Services at the RAH is limited and requests for BCG vaccination will be triaged according to clinical urgency. As it may take up to 12 weeks for the vaccine to take full effect, and due to limited availability, requests for BCG vaccination should occur at least 3 months prior to planned departure to a country where TB is more common.

For more information

Royal Adelaide Hospital
SA TB Services
Telephone: (08) 7117 2967
Monday-Friday, 8:45am-4:45pm

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Created/Revised: Sep 2022
Version: 1
Reference: CALHN-CIS#####



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