

Authors: **Dr Charmaine Gauci** and **Dr David Pace**



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON IMMUNISATION POLICY MALTA



5B, The Emporium, C. De Brocktorff Str., Msida MSD 1421 Malta.  
Tel: 2326 6000, Fax: 2326 6104, [www.ehealth.gov.mt](http://www.ehealth.gov.mt)



**Ministry for Health**

# Protect Your Child Against Tuberculosis



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Parent information leaflet

## What is tuberculosis? How can I protect my baby against tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious infection that can affect the lungs, brain, bones, joints and lymph glands and can result in serious disability or even death. The bacteria that cause TB are spread through close contact such as from coughing or sneezing. Babies and children less than 5 years old can be protected against tuberculosis with the Bacille-Calmette Guérin (BCG) vaccine.

## Who should have the BCG vaccine?

The BCG vaccine is given to babies and children who are at a higher risk of getting TB. Your baby/child is at risk of TB and should receive the BCG vaccine only if you fall under ANY of the following conditions:

- a) You or your partner (or anyone caring for the child) come from a country with a high rate of TB such as: Africa, Russia (and the states of the former Soviet Union), the Indian subcontinent, South East Asia, China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan) and South America
- b) You or your partner come from any other country where the BCG is given routinely to babies
- c) You or your partner (or any person who will be caring for your baby) have lived in a country with a high rate of TB
- d) You intend to take your baby or child to a high risk country for 3 months or longer
- e) You will be living with a family member who has or had TB in the past.



## When may the BCG vaccine be given?

The BCG vaccine may be given from birth and is given for free in Malta. Babies/children who are being tested for HIV, or who suffer from a problem with their immune system, or who in the last 5 years have been in contact with a person suffering from infectious TB, or who are being investigated for possible TB should not receive the BCG vaccine. Vaccination will have to be delayed if your child has fever greater than 38°C.

## What happens after BCG vaccination?

The BCG vaccine is given in the left arm. A small red mark appears around 3-6 weeks after vaccination and remains visible for several weeks. It is normal that the site of injection oozes or a scab forms over the mark. This will heal by leaving a small permanent scar.



After vaccination you may wash your baby normally. There is no need to cover the injection site except if it oozes in which case you should apply a dry plaster that should be changed regularly. No other vaccine should be given in the left arm within 3 months following BCG vaccination.

## Are there any side effects?

Rarely some babies get swollen glands under their arm or a deep ulcer or abscess at the injection site. If this happens, please call the Chest Unit, Qormi Health Centre, on 2144 0177 or speak to your doctor.

## What do I do now?

If your baby falls into any one of the criteria mentioned above he/she would need to be protected with the BCG vaccine. An appointment for BCG immunisation will be organised for your child before you leave hospital.