

# Would you like more information before deciding to have your child vaccinated?

This information is directed at parents who have decided not to have their child vaccinated or are uncertain about doing so.

It is always you as a parent who decides whether or not your child should be vaccinated. You have the right to be told about all the benefits and risks of preventive healthcare procedures and treatments. This also applies to vaccinations.

If you choose not to have your child vaccinated, or to postpone vaccination, you can change your mind at any time in the future. Many parents who choose not to have their child vaccinated through the national vaccination programme decide to have them vaccinated when they are a little older.

## What do you need to know?

To help you feel secure in your decision not to have your child vaccinated, or to postpone vaccination, there are a number of factors you need to be aware of as a parent:

- The benefits and risks associated with the recommended vaccines that are included in the national and regional child vaccination programmes. Further information is available via the links below.
- An unvaccinated child runs the risk of being infected and falling ill with a disease such as whooping cough, which is one of the diseases we vaccinate against in the child vaccination programme. The disease could be serious and result in permanent injury. As long as an unvaccinated child remains in settings where the vast majority of people have been vaccinated they are protected by what is known as herd immunity (although this does not apply to tetanus, see below for more information). In that case the risk of being infected is low.

- However, it only takes one infected person to enter a group for the risk of infection to take hold. The risk increases if the disease is spread through the air, as is the case with measles for example. The risk of infection also increases when a large number of people gather in one place. For slightly older children and adolescents this could be at a youth camp, concert, or sports event.
- When travelling with unvaccinated children, it should be borne in mind that even if the risk of infection at the final destination is low, you could on the way there pass through places where the risk of infection is higher – an airport for example.
- Certain diseases that we vaccinate against are common in other countries. An unvaccinated child could fall ill with one of these diseases when travelling or if they come into contact with someone who arrives in Sweden after being in one of the countries in question.
- An unvaccinated child could risk being infected with other diseases that we vaccinate against. Infants who are too young to be vaccinated and individuals with certain immunodeficiency disorders are particularly vulnerable.
- It is important to tell healthcare professionals that your child has not been vaccinated. Certain procedures or treatments would then be necessary and in some cases critical (see below regarding preventive treatment against tetanus).

## Information to an unvaccinated child

As a parent, you are advised to note down and eventually inform your child about the fact that you have decided on their behalf that they should not be vaccinated. Otherwise there is a risk that later on in life they will think they have been vaccinated in the same way as “all other children”. They could, for example, go travelling without being aware of the risk of being infected.

## How can tetanus be prevented in unvaccinated children?

In the links below you can read about tetanus and the other diseases that we vaccinate against in Sweden. If your unvaccinated child is suspected of having tetanus, you must as their parent know exactly what action needs to be taken without delay.

Tetanus is a serious wound infection caused by bacteria that live in soil and manure. This can occur in any country in the world. If left untreated, tetanus is often fatal.

An effective vaccine against tetanus is included in the general vaccination programme in Sweden. Vaccination is the only means of protection against tetanus as neither having the disease in the past nor herd immunity offer any resistance. In Sweden, a number of cases of tetanus among unvaccinated individuals, mainly older adults, are reported each year.

Tetanus can occur after being bitten by an animal or from a cut suffered when working in the garden or playing in the park. It is therefore recommended that your young child is vaccinated against tetanus before they begin playing outdoors. Tetanus can occur in even the smallest of cuts or wounds.

If you have a pet – a cat or dog for example – there could be a risk of tetanus if you are scratched or bitten. Further information about tetanus is available on the Public Health Authority website:

## [Tetanus – Public Health Authority](#)

If your unvaccinated or only partly vaccinated child has a cut or a wound, or is bitten by an animal, you must take them to an accident and emergency unit immediately for assessment. The doctor will then decide whether immunoglobulin aimed specifically at tetanus bacteria should be administered or not.

Immunoglobulin is an antibody in your immune system that detects and identifies foreign bodies such as viruses and bacteria.

The doctor will also assess whether your child should be vaccinated against tetanus.

Further information, both for you as a parent and for your child's doctor or nurse, is available in

[Stelkrampsprofylax vid sårskador - vårdgivarguiden \(Prophylaxis for tetanus-prone cuts and wounds – care provider guide\)](#)

Do not hesitate to talk to a nurse or doctor at your child welfare centre if you have any questions or thoughts.

## Further information

[National Handbook](#)

[Vaccinating children – 1177.se](#)

[Vaccinations and safety – Public Health Authority](#)

[Vaccination information](#)

[Information](#) to parents and guardians about the Swedish Immunisation Programme for Children (available in several languages)

[Oxford Vaccine Group](#)

[Child welfare centre podcast: Vaccination – why it is so important](#)

[Child welfare centre podcast: Vaccination – who can I trust?](#)