

PORTUGAL

The Portuguese National Vaccination Programme (PNV) exists since 1965 and is universal, free and accessible to everybody in the country. This means that the Ministry of Health buys all the vaccines recommended by this Programme and these are not commercially available in the private market. The recommended vaccination schedule (update available in the EUVAC website) is a universal prescription, to be used by all the health services dependant of the Ministry of Health. These are primary care health services and exist throughout all the country, serving all the population (the smallest structure is the local health centre). All the health centres have vaccination services where the vaccines are administered daily by nurses. Vaccines recommended by the National Vaccination Programme are given for free with the aid of the National Guidelines (available at www.dgs.pt – direct link: <http://www.dgs.pt/upload/membro.id/ficheiros/i008019.pdf>).

PNV vaccines are also administered in hospitals to newborns (Hep B and BCG) and to others, in special circumstances (ex. Tetanus prophylaxis in wound management).

Although PNV vaccines are purchased and delivered by the MoH services, there are some private health services that make protocols with the public health services in order to receive vaccines and guidelines to be able to administer them to their own patients, also for free.

The PNV also includes, free of charge, some special target groups, other than the ones mentioned in the routine vaccination schedule:

- Hep B: risk groups
- Polio: Travellers to endemic areas, lab workers who manage samples potentially contaminated, immunocompromised individuals
- MMR: women > 18 years of age of childbearing age, not previously vaccinated with rubella vaccine
- Td: women of childbearing age not previously vaccinated with tetanus vaccine, pregnant women not previously vaccinated with tetanus vaccine, tetanus prophylaxis for wound management.

The Directorate-General of Health (DGS) (directly linked with the MoH) coordinates the PNV, through:

- hosting and leading the Vaccination Technical Committee (the committee that advises the Director-General and the Minister of Health about new vaccination policies and guidelines on vaccination);
- releasing national guidelines for the routine childhood vaccination;
- technical liaison with the pharmaceutical industry;
- monitoring vaccine coverage;
- national mandatory surveillance of the infectious diseases prevented by vaccination;
- communicating with the other institutions involved in the PNV.

The National Institute for the Financial and Information Management of the Health Ministry is in charge of opening public contests for the national vaccines purchase and makes the contracts with the selected companies who will make

the distribution of the stocks to the Health Subregions and the Autonomous Regions.

The National Institute for Pharmacy and Medicines is in charge of authorising the marketing of the vaccines (like other medicines), controlling the lot quality and monitoring the adverse reactions following immunization (included in the Adverse Drug Reactions Monitoring System).

The 18 Health Subregions (3rd administrative level) and the 2 Autonomous Regions (Madeira and Açores) hold and manage the vaccine stocks and cold chain, distributing them to the local level.

Although Autonomous Regions (Madeira and Açores islands) are independent regions, they generally adopt the continent PNV guidelines and they are also included in the national MoH purchase of vaccines.

All the vaccines consumed in Portugal are imported – there is no national production of vaccines.

The vaccine coverage is homogeneous across the Health Subregions and generally about 95%.

The MoH also purchases some of the vaccines recommended for travellers, to be administered in the travel clinics of the MoH (also included in the public contests). These vaccines are:

- Yellow fever
- Men ACW₁₃₅Y
- Typhoid fever
- Japanese encephalitis
- Rabies

Other private travel clinics also buy and administer vaccines for travellers.

Other vaccines, like influenza, pneumococcal, varicella, hepatitis A can also be administered in the local vaccination services (in the health centres) but only with a prescription of the doctor. These are bought by the patient in the pharmacies and for some of them the state pays a part (generally 40%) of the total cost. Of these, only the influenza vaccine is recommended by DGS to the risk groups, however it is not totally supported by the MoH (only 40% of the total cost).

In January 2006 the PNV vaccination schedule was updated and new guidelines were released (<http://www.dgs.pt/upload/membro.id/ficheiros/i008019.pdf>).

The new changes were:

- substitution of the OPV by the IPV
- substitution of the whole-cell pertussis by the acellular pertussis
- introduction of the pentavalent vaccine DTaP/IPV/Hib
- introduction of the tetravalent vaccines DTaP/IPV and DTaP/Hib
- introduction of MenC in the routine schedule + catch-up campaign to for the birth cohorts of 1989 to September 2004

Vaccination Schedule

Abbreviations

The Portuguese Childhood Vaccination Schedule								
	DTaP	IPV	Hib	HepB	MMR	BCG	MenC	dT
At birth				Yes		Yes		
2 months	Yes ¹	Yes ¹	Yes ¹	Yes				
3 months							Yes	
4 months	Yes ¹	Yes ¹	Yes ¹					
5 months							Yes	
6 months	Yes ¹	Yes ¹	Yes ¹	Yes				
15 months					Yes		Yes	
18 months	Yes ²		Yes ²					
5-6 years	Yes ³	Yes ³			Yes			
10-13 years				Yes ⁴				Yes
Every 10 years								Yes

The Portuguese Childhood Vaccination Schedule as on 23 March 2006

¹ DTaP, IPV and Hib are given in one injection.

² DTaP and Hib are given in one injection

³ DTaP and IPV are given in one injection

⁴ Three doses of HepB vaccination are given to those born before 1999 in 0-1-6 month schedule.

This summary chart is adapted from the national vaccination schedule for Portugal, recommended by the Direcção Geral De Saúde de Portugal - DGS (General Directorate of Health). More information on the childhood vaccination schedule in Portugal may be accessed through the website at www.dgsaude.pt (in Portuguese).

A Computerised Vaccination Registry System is being gradually implemented throughout the country since the year 2000 and at this moment most of the local health centres, all the Subregions (3rd administrative level) and Regions (2nd administrative level) of Health are working with this system. This system allows vaccine stocks management and automatic calculation of vaccine coverage in real time, however this will only be possible at national level when all the health centres are connected. All the individual vaccine inoculations can be registered in the system. Before this system was in place, all the vaccine inoculations were registered and counted manually (this is still used as a check of the computerised system).