

Commonly used medicines and vaccines in NICU

Why does my baby need medicines?

Babies admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) may need medicines to help them:

- breathe
- feed
- grow
- fight infection
- protect them from illness.

Some medicines are given for a short time, while others may be needed for longer periods.

Your baby's care team carefully considers the benefits and risks of all medicines. They will discuss these with you whenever possible.

What are the commonly used medicines and vaccines?

Vitamin K	Given soon after birth to help prevent serious bleeding.
Hepatitis B vaccine	Protects against hepatitis B, a serious liver infection.
Caffeine	Used to help babies who have pauses in breathing (apnoea of prematurity).
Antibiotics (like benzylpenicillin, gentamicin)	Used to treat or prevent infection while we review test results to confirm if infection is present.
Vitamin D	Supports healthy bone growth and development.
Steroids (like dexamethasone)	May be used to reduce lung inflammation.
Sucrose	Used to reduce mild pain or discomfort during minor procedures such as blood tests.
Probiotics	Increase good bacteria in the gut. This can prevent infections in some preterm babies.
Nystatin	Prevents fungal infections. It can also treat some fungal infections.
Iron	Used to prevent low iron levels (anaemia) in some preterm babies.
Routine childhood immunisations	Your baby will receive these vaccines according to the Australian Immunisation Schedule, even if they are still in hospital.

Your baby may also receive other medicines depending on their individual needs.

Are these medicines safe for premature or unwell babies?

Yes. These medicines are commonly used with newborn babies. They are given at doses specifically adjusted for them.

However, like all medicines, they can have possible side effects. They may include:

- changes in heart rate or breathing
- feeding problems, like vomiting or unsettled feeds.

Your healthcare team will monitor your baby closely and act quickly if there are any concerns.

Will my baby need medicines at home?

Some babies may go home on medicines such as iron and vitamin D. Your healthcare team will give you clear instructions if this is required.

Where can you get more information?

If you have questions about your baby's medicines, speak with your baby's nurse, doctor, or pharmacist.

Medicines Information Service

The Royal Women's Hospital

Hours: 9am to 4pm (Monday to Friday)

T: (03) 8345 3190

E: drug.information@thewomens.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?



Interpreter

You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au