

# Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) Vaccine

## Tuberculosis (TB)

Tuberculosis is caused by mycobacteria. It spreads through the air and usually affects the lungs (pulmonary TB). Other parts of the body, such as bones, liver, brain and kidneys, can also be affected (extrapulmonary TB). TB is still a common health problem locally, since Hong Kong is a densely populated community.

## BCG Vaccine

### **A. Why get vaccinated?**

Although BCG does not prevent TB infection, it helps to localize infection to the lungs and is effective in protecting against serious illness, especially TB meningitis. All babies and children should be vaccinated.

### **B. When should my child get vaccinated?**

All local newborns should be given BCG at birth to protect against TB infection. For children aged less than 15 years, residing in Hong Kong and not given BCG before, direct BCG vaccination is recommended.

### **C. Some individuals with the following conditions should NOT get BCG or should wait**

1. babies who are symptomatic HIV carriers or suffering from AIDS\*
2. has received other live vaccines in the past four weeks
3. on long term corticosteroids
4. immunodeficiency
5. pregnancy
6. cancer

\* BCG is recommended for ALL newborn babies at birth in Hong Kong, irrespective of the HIV status of the mother. However, if BCG is somehow not given at birth and the child is diagnosed to be HIV positive later in life, the child should be assessed by a paediatrician whether he / she is fit for the vaccine.

### **D. What are the Risks?**

- As with any medicine, BCG carries a small risk of adverse reaction.
- Some children may develop a small red papule or ulcer at the site of injection **2-4 weeks** after vaccination. This will gradually subside and heal in a few weeks, leaving a small scar or no scar at all. Occasionally a few children may develop lumps under the armpit due to enlarged glands. Other adverse reactions are very rare.
- Parents do not have to worry if there is pus or ulceration. This is a normal reaction.
- The child can take baths as usual. Keep the injection site clean and dry. Use cooled boiled water for cleaning the site if necessary, and wipe dry with a clean gauze afterwards.
- Do not apply any medication or ointment and do not compress or bandage the site. Wear loose clothings.

**If you have any query, please ask the nurses or doctors at our  
Maternal & Child Health Centre of the Department of Health.**