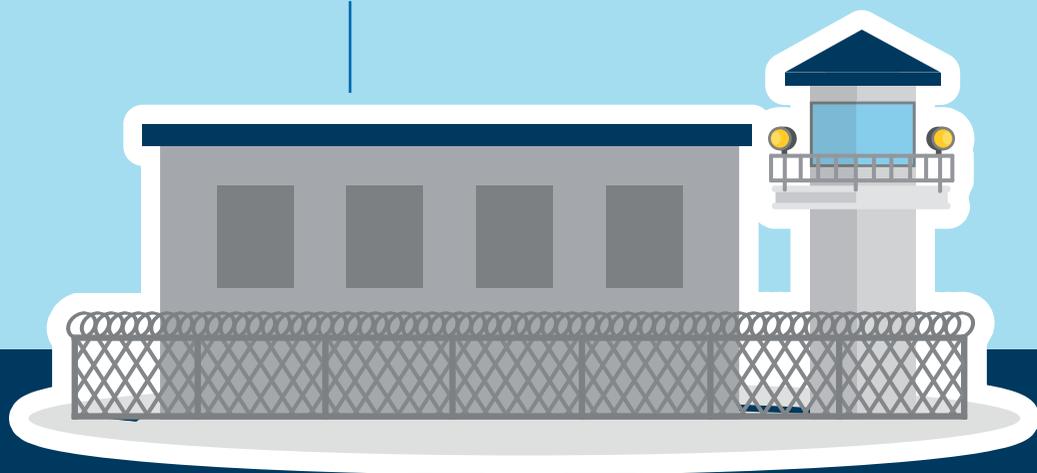




Vaccination in prison



Helping you make informed decisions

Partners working on RISE-Vac



Co-funded by the European Union's Health Programme (2014-2020)

Disclaimer

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2 Vaccination in prison

Providing what you asked for

It is important to be informed when making a decision about medical care, and in prison it can be very difficult to get the information you want. This brochure aims to inform people living in prison about vaccines so that you can make informed decisions and take up the offer of vaccination and protection from infectious disease. Hundreds of people living in prisons across Europe were asked what information they would like to receive about vaccines, and we have included the information they requested in this document.

Our project is called RISE-Vac. RISE-Vac is a European project aiming to increase knowledge about vaccines in prisons across Europe and is made up of nine different institutions (universities, prisons, medical centres, national public health organisations) across Europe.

You can find details of all these organisations on the last page of this document. All of the work, including asking people living in prisons what they wanted to receive, was funded by the European Commission; former prisoners have been deeply involved in the co-production of this brochure and we have drawn on their understanding of prison to make sure that the information is presented in a way that is relevant.



Key facts

Vaccines are a very effective way to prevent infections and have been used for over 200 years. Each year vaccines prevent millions of deaths.

The prison environment often makes it easy for infection to spread quickly. Other factors such as poor general health before prison also mean that people living in prison can be more vulnerable to catching infections. That is why it is important to be vaccinated to give you the best protection against infectious disease.

Vaccines go through a very careful production process before being approved for medical use, this includes checking that they are as safe and effective as possible.

Vaccines teach your immune system to protect your body from diseases in a safer way than by catching the disease itself. Most routine vaccines offer lifelong protection against infections that can be severe or deadly if you catch them.

As with any medicine, there can be side effects from vaccination, but these are usually mild and rarely have as much impact as actually catching the disease would.

Not everyone can be vaccinated. By vaccinating yourself you contribute to protecting others from infections too.

What are the benefits of the vaccination?

Being vaccinated against the most common infectious diseases in prison helps you and others stay healthy



Vaccines are a very effective way to prevent infections, and each year vaccines prevent millions of deaths. Being vaccinated against the most common infectious diseases in prison will help you stay healthy. It is much safer for your body to learn how to fight a disease through vaccination, than by catching the disease and treating it.

Not everyone can be vaccinated. For example those who are being treated for cancer cannot receive the vaccine. By vaccinating yourself, you contribute to protecting others from infections too.

The more people in your prison who are vaccinated, the better the **protection** will be as the disease will have less chance to spread widely.

If you have any questions about vaccination, you can ask healthcare staff working in the prison.

Why is vaccination so important in prison?

People in prison may be more likely to be exposed to infectious diseases or become seriously ill from these diseases for the reasons listed in this section.



Risk factors prior to prison

Underlying health conditions

People living in prison may have poorer general health when they come into prison than the average person of the same age outside prison.

They may have pre-existing conditions such as heart problems, asthma, arthritis, cancer or diabetes which can make them more vulnerable to infections.

Other risk factors

People living in prison may have suffered periods of homelessness or rough sleeping which can make them more vulnerable to infection, and may have received limited access to healthcare and health information.

Some people may also have been exposed to infection through unclean needles or unprotected sex.

The prison environment

The prison environment makes it easy for diseases to enter and spread, for the following reasons: Sharing of cells, showers, toilets, and other communal spaces.

Infectious diseases can easily spread through people using the same spaces and touching the same surfaces.

High number of people in an enclosed space

Prisons hold a lot of people and when you include staff that number increases.

This makes it easier for infectious diseases to spread from one person to the next, and many prisons are not well-ventilated.

High turnover of people

People move from prison to prison as they serve their sentence. Staff also go in and out of prison. This flow of people through the prisons means there are many opportunities for infectious diseases to enter prisons.

How does vaccination work?

Vaccines work with your body's immune system to build protection against infection.

Vaccines reduce the risk of getting a disease by working with your body's immune system to build protection.

When you get a vaccine, your immune system responds by:

recognising the invading germ, such as the virus or bacteria

producing antibodies which are produced naturally by the immune system to fight disease

remembering the disease and how to fight it so if you are exposed to the germ again, your immune system can quickly destroy it before you become unwell

Our immune systems are designed to remember. Once exposed to one or more doses of a routine vaccine, we usually stay protected against a disease for years, decades or even a lifetime.

Rather than treating a disease after we get it, vaccines help stop us getting ill with the disease in the first place. It's much safer for your

immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them. Vaccines are often given by injection but some can be given by mouth or sprayed into the nose. Some vaccines are given in multiple doses, and it's important to have all the doses to be fully protected.

How are vaccines produced?

Like all medicines, every vaccine must go through very serious and robust testing to make sure it is as effective as possible before it can be given.

A new potential vaccine will only be tested on humans after it has gone through many rigorous safety tests in the lab, including animal testing.

Promising vaccines that are thought to be safe and effective are then tested on volunteers in clinical trials. This is done in several phases, and at every stage the safety of the vaccine is assessed. People who participate in these trials are adequately informed and consent to their participation.



When the results of all these trials are available, vaccines are scrutinised by doctors and independent scientific experts, as well as government health officials, before they are approved and licensed for use.

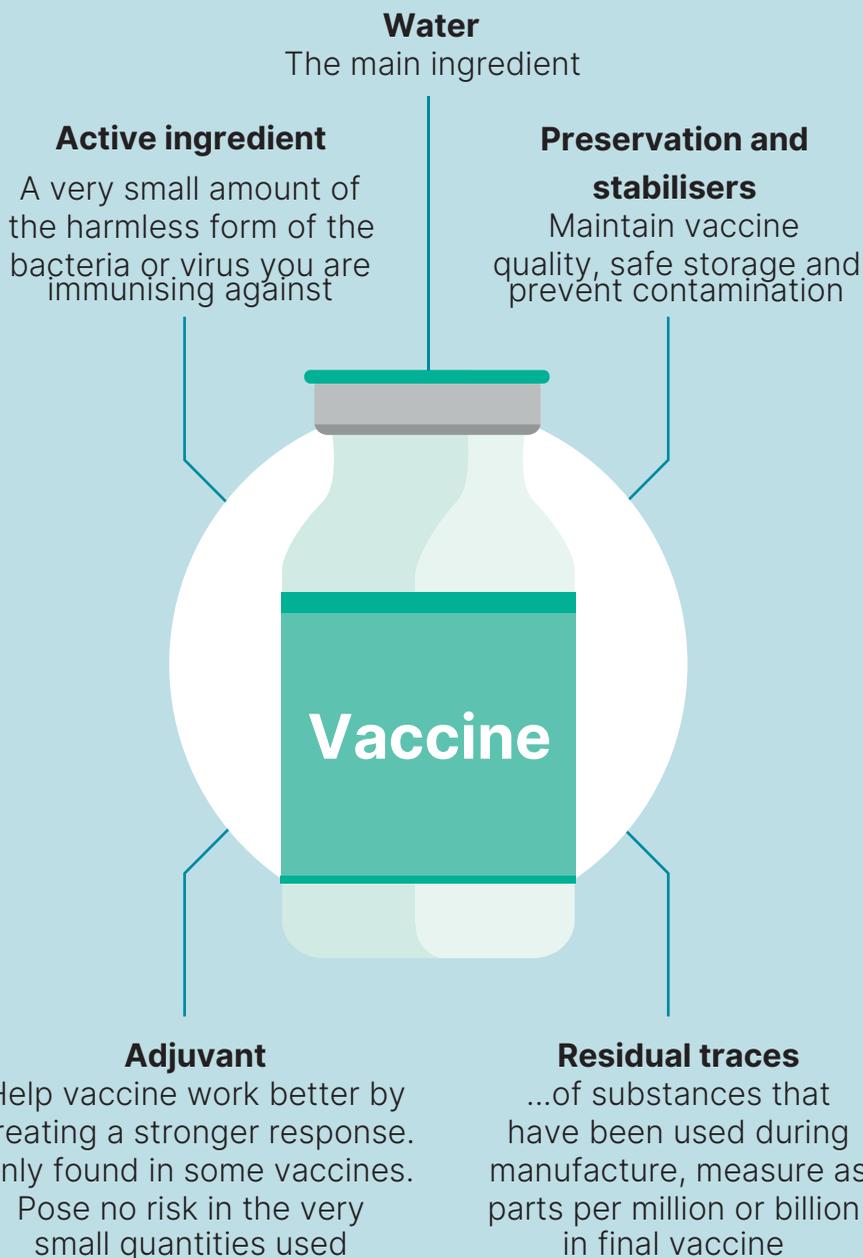
A vaccine must be proven safe and effective before it will be approved. Vaccines are then monitored after being approved for the public.

Safety is assessed even after a vaccine has been fully licensed.

Most countries have a system to feedback information about side effects. These records are used to check safety and make sure that vaccines continue to be as safe as possible.

Pharmaceutical companies, like all private companies, do make financial profit, but it is in their interest to produce safe vaccines which will protect people from disease.

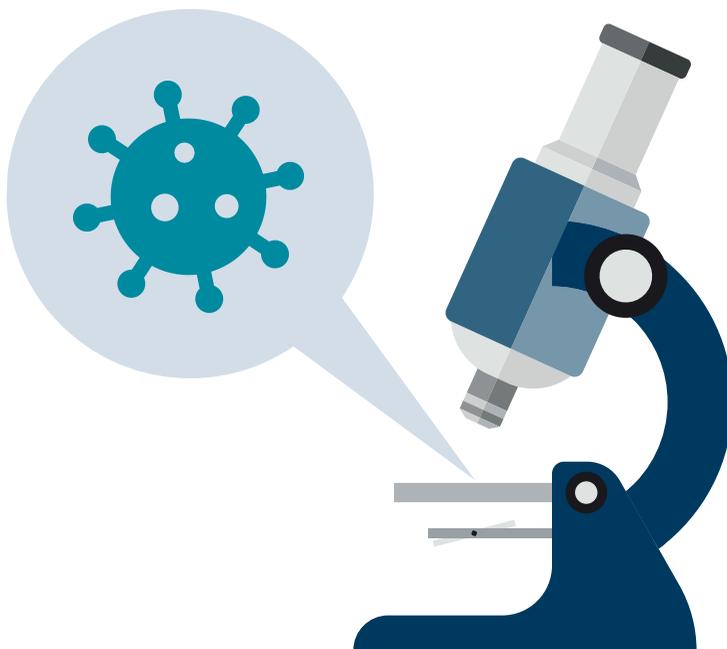
The ingredients of the vaccine include:



Some vaccines are included in the routine schedule and have been licensed for a very long time, for example the hepatitis B vaccine, whilst others are given in response to particular outbreaks or for groups that are particularly at risk, such as COVID-19 vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccination was developed rapidly in response to a pandemic in which no one had protection from this new disease that was spreading rapidly, so there was great urgency.

Therefore, more resources were made available and the vaccine was able to be produced 'more quickly'. Different trial phases were run at the same time to help speed up the process and administrative barriers were removed, so things worked far quicker than usual, but approvals processes remained as important as ever.



Side effects

While vaccines can have side effects, most are mild and severe side effects are extremely rare.

All medicines can cause side effects, but vaccines are among the very safest. Research from around the world shows that vaccination is a very safe way to protect you, your family and your child's health.

Because of how vaccines work, it's always possible to have side effects after vaccination.

These are often as a result of your body's immune system being activated to fight the vaccine as planned. Each person's body and immune system is different and that is why the reaction will be different for each person.

Most side effects are mild, such as a low-grade fever, or pain or redness at the injection site. You can use common painkillers such as paracetamol to manage your symptoms.

Mild reactions go away within a few days on their own.

Severe or long-lasting side effects are extremely rare.

Any rare side effects that are discovered are investigated further.

Very rarely, people can have an allergic reaction soon after vaccination. This reaction may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body. The doctor or nurse giving the vaccine will know how to treat this. It does not mean that you should stop having vaccinations. Even more rarely, children or adults can have a severe reaction, within a few minutes of the vaccination, which causes breathing difficulties and can cause you or your child to collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction.

You can always ask healthcare staff in prison about the side effects of any vaccine.

A recent study has shown that there is only 1 anaphylactic reaction in about a million vaccinations. An anaphylactic reaction is a severe and immediate allergic reaction that needs urgent medical attention. The people who give vaccinations are trained to deal with anaphylactic reactions and children and adults recover completely with treatment.

How effective vaccines have been

Have you heard of polio?

If not, this is probably because of vaccination.

More than 1.5 million deaths in children have been avoided thanks to the polio vaccine, and more than 18 million people can walk today who would otherwise have been paralysed. Wild poliovirus cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988, from an estimated 350,000 cases in more than 125 endemic countries then, to 6 reported cases in 2021.

Vaccination is a key part of primary health care.

It reaches more people than any other health service worldwide. **Vaccination currently prevents 3.5-5 million deaths every year from diseases like diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, influenza and measles.** Smallpox was a very deadly disease before the introduction of the smallpox vaccine. Since 1980, after a mass vaccination effort, there are no longer any cases.

Since vaccines were introduced we have seen far fewer cases of diseases such as polio, which can cause serious illness, disability or even death.

As these diseases become rarer, they become less visible. However, if people stop having vaccines, it's possible for serious infectious diseases that have become rare to quickly spread again.

Vaccines prevent up to 5 million deaths worldwide every year.

Vaccines you may come across in prison

COVID-19

Protecting against severe disease, especially for older people or at risk adults with a weakened immune system.

Hepatitis B

Protecting against liver cancer or liver failure. Hepatitis B caused an estimated 820,000 deaths worldwide in 2019.

HPV

Protecting against cervical cancer, penile cancer, head and neck cancer, and anal cancer. Approximately 95% of all cervical cancers are caused by HPV.

Influenza (Flu)

Very important for risk groups (pregnant women, people with health conditions such as severe asthma, diabetes, having cancer treatment, those experiencing severe mental health difficulties, or severe learning disabilities) and to prevent prison outbreaks.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)

Protects against measles, mumps and rubella, which can cause severe disability and death.

Meningococcal

Protects against meningitis, which can cause severe disability and death.

Pneumococcal

Protects against pneumonia and meningitis, which can cause severe disability and death.

Tetanus, diphtheria and polio

Protects against tetanus, diphtheria and polio, which can cause severe disability and death.

A final word

Vaccination is an important way of preventing infectious disease for all, but it is particularly important for people living in prison. People living in prison should have the right to access the same vaccinations as people in the community, and should have access to information about vaccines.

Healthcare institutions have partnered with non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, former

prisoners, prison services and government agencies across Europe to create materials that people living in prisons wanted regarding vaccines. Vaccination helps protect your health and the health of those you come into contact with while in prison, as well as those you'll be in contact with when released.

We hope that you now feel able to have the vaccinations you need to protect you from infectious disease.

Further questions

If you have further questions about vaccination or your health, please discuss this with your healthcare staff in your prison.



We are stronger together when we are vaccinated



If you'd like to know more about how we developed this brochure you can contact:

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If you have any questions about the RISE-Vac project, please contact:

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