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**Special  
report**  
Medicine  
and health

## New injection introduced for children

**James Meikle**  
**Monday August 28, 2006**  
[The Guardian](#)

Parents are being urged to have their babies inoculated against the pneumococcal virus, which kills one in 10 children who fall ill from it. The virus causes meningitis, blood poisoning and pneumonia.

About 50 children die each year from the contagion in England and Wales out of about 530 cases, prompting ministers to add more vaccinations to the childhood immunisation programme this autumn. Injections will be given at two, four and 13 months, with catch-up shots for children up to two years old.

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The campaign will be launched next week. Leaflets in surgeries will explain other changes involving the spacing of injections against meningitis C and Hib infection, which can cause another type of meningitis and other deadly conditions.

Health minister Caroline Flint said: "Immunisation is the best way to protect children from serious disease and the routine childhood programme has been extremely effective in achieving this."

Charities said the new jab would save lives and spare at least 100 children the devastating after-effects of the disease. The jab was introduced in the US six years ago but delayed in the UK because of cost - at £34.50 a shot it costs more than all other childhood vaccines put together.

Philip Kirby, chief executive of the Meningitis Trust, said it would significantly reduce pneumococcal meningitis, which killed in 20% of cases and left another 25% with severe after-effects.

Denise Vaughan, of the Meningitis Research Foundation, warned that vaccination could not prevent all types of meningitis, meaning people still needed to learn their symptoms.

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