

The setting up of the immunisation schedule in Finland is the responsibility of Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The main actor under the ministry, when vaccinations are considered, is National Public Health Institute (KTL) which has two departments directly involved: Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Department of Vaccines. The former is responsible for the epidemiological surveillance of vaccine preventable diseases and the latter for purchasing and distributing of the vaccines, evaluating the vaccine coverage, evaluating the relevancy of the introduction of new vaccines into the schedule and collecting and analysing of adverse events linked to vaccines. In addition, there is the National Advisory Committee on Vaccination (KRAR) where experts are gathered from KTL as well as from other interested bodies in the field such as Paediatric societies or universities. The funds for vaccines are listed as a line item in the national budget ruled by the Finnish Government and Parliament.

The schedule is set at the national level and applies to the whole country. All vaccines included in the national programme are performed in public maternal and child health clinics, health centres or sometimes in needle-exchange points for example for i.v. drug users. One exception has also been the BCG given at the hospital at birth. No common childhood vaccinations or risk group targeted vaccinations are given privately. In all these mentioned clinics the general vaccination programme vaccines for both infants and for risk groups are given free of charge.

Since the beginning of 2005, the core of the Finnish schedule has been a pentavalent combination vaccine given for prevention of five diseases at 3, 5 and 12 month of age (see table). In addition MMR is given to all children twice. Hepatitis A and B, BCG and influenza are provided only for risk groups as part of the National immunisation programme. All 65 years old and older are included in the risk group then influenza is concerned. In addition, as a geographical risk group vaccination, TBE is given to all people over 7 years of age living permanently in Åland, the island between Finland and Sweden with 25 000 inhabitants.

All vaccines are also sold in pharmacies but require prescription. Also private sector can be utilised for vaccinations (for travelling etc).

Vaccination coverage is assessed by KTL every other year by a sample of 1000 children. So no information is collected about the differences inside the country. The last figures are from year 2004 when old programme with 12 doses before the second birthday was still running. The coverage all in all is very high, the point estimates for different vaccines are 95-99% for the National infant programme.

The www pages for KTL are www.ktl.fi, where vaccinations are also mentioned in English but rather briefly, in Finnish information is plenty.

The childhood vaccination schedule in Finland in sep 2006

Age	Vaccines						
	BCG	DTaP	ipv	dtap	Hib	Hepatitis B	Measles – mumps – rubella
Birth	Yes*					Yes*	
3 months		yes	yes		yes		
5 months		yes	yes		yes		
12 months		yes	yes		yes		
14-18 months							yes
4 years		yes	yes				
6 years							yes
14-15 years				yes			

*for risk groups