



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Public Health




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TO: California Vaccines for Children (VFC) Providers

FROM: Robert Schechter, M.D., Chief 
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SUBJECT: Updates and reminders for vaccinating American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children



- ✓ AI/AN children are at high risk of vaccine-preventable diseases and benefit significantly from immunization.
- ✓ Vaxelis, a combination Hib vaccine, has been added as a preferential recommendation for AI/AN children.
- ✓ AI/AN children should receive a second dose of Nirsevimab in their first and second RSV seasons.

Dear VFC Provider:

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children historically have had higher rates of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and RSV disease. Vaccinating AI/AN children against Hib, invasive pneumococcal disease, hepatitis A and B, and rotavirus has reduced severe illness and hospitalization (AAP Red Book). Ongoing disparities highlight the importance of immunizing AI/AN children..

DTaP-IPV-Hib-HepB (Vaxelis®) now included in the preferential recommendation for Hib vaccination of AI/AN infants (primary series)

On June 26th 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended inclusion of DTaP-IPV-Hib-HepB (Vaxelis®) as a preferential option for Hib vaccination of AI/AN infants. PRP-OMP (PedvaxHIB) remains as an option preferentially recommended for AI/AN children, who historically have had a higher incidence of Hib meningitis. (CDC MMWR, 2024)



Data from a [phase IV randomized controlled trial](#) comparing Vaxelis to PedvaxHIB showed that anti-Hib antibody levels in infants were similarly high in both groups at 30 days and 150 days after vaccination. Data were unavailable to determine outcomes of rare, invasive Hib disease. The safety profile of Vaxelis was consistent with most licensed comparator vaccines, with no serious adverse events associated with study participation, and no unexpected safety issues identified post-licensure.

Utilizing a combination vaccine reduces the overall number of injections a child needs to complete their primary immunization series. However, please note that Vaxelis is recommended only for the 3-dose Hib primary series at age 2, 4, and 6 months. A different Hib-containing vaccine is needed for the booster dose at age 12-15 months.

Nirsevimab Recommended for AI/AN Children Age 0-19 Months

Given their increased risk of severe respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) disease, AI/AN children younger than 19 months of age are recommended to receive nirsevimab (Beyfortus) to protect against severe RSV disease. All infants, including AI/AN infants, younger than 8 months old should receive 1 dose of nirsevimab in their first RSV season. AI/AN children 8-19 months of age should receive another dose of nirsevimab going into their second RSV season. Nirsevimab should optimally be administered before the start of RSV season but can be administered through March.

A [recent population-based surveillance study](#) among AI/AN children found that RSV-associated hospitalization rates in 2019-2020 were 1.7-7.1 times higher than in the general population. High rates of hospitalization were seen in AI/AN children up to 36 months of age, with the highest rates occurring at < 6 months of age. Children living in rural areas had higher rates of hospitalization compared to those in urban regions.

Please continue offering AI/AN children all recommended childhood immunizations, including Hib and RSV immunizations as discussed above.

Resources for Vaxelis

- [Use of Hib Vaccines Among AI/AN Infants: Updated ACIP Recommendations, 2024](#)
- [CDPH Vaxelis VFC Letter, 2021](#)
- [CDPH PedvaxHIB Letter, 2010](#)
- [CDC Vaxelis Fact Sheet with Sample Immunization Schedules](#)
- [The HibVax Study Immunogenicity of H. influenzae type b PRP-OMP vaccines in American Indian and Alaska Native infants](#)
- [AAP Red Book Chapter “Immunization in American Indian/Alaska Native Children and Adolescents”, 33rd Edition](#)

Resources for Nirsevimab

- [CDPH Nirsevimab Letter, 2023](#)
- [CDC RSV Prevention Information for Healthcare Providers](#)