

BULGARIA

Bulgarian Immunization Program is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. By virtue of the Law on Health, Article 58, to protect the citizens from particular communicable diseases some immunizations are mandatory. In accordance with this Law, the Immunization Program as a whole is to be organized and implemented under the corresponding specific Regulation approved by the Minister of Health. In this Regulation the Minister of Health determines the immunizations as follows:

1. Mandatory immunizations included in the Immunization Calendar of the Republic of Bulgaria
2. Immunizations indicated in specific conditions
3. Recommended immunizations

The current **Regulation No. 15 for the immunizations in Bulgaria** was approved by the Minister of Health on 12th May 2005. This Regulation specifies: 1) Target populations for mandatory immunizations, immunizations indicated in specific conditions and recommended immunizations;

2) Immunization schedule; 3) Requirements regarding vaccines and their application.

Mandatory immunizations are those included in the National Immunization Calendar (shown in Table 1);

Immunizations indicated in specific conditions are those against Rabies, Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever and Typhoid fever;

Recommended immunizations are those against Yellow fever, Hepatitis A, H. influenzae type B, Str. Pneumoniae, Meningococcal meningitis and Influenza.

Vaccines for **mandatory immunizations** and **immunizations for specific conditions** are paid and purchased by the Ministry of Health. Vaccines are allocated from the MoH Central vaccine store to each of the **28 Regional Inspectorates for Protection and Control of Public Health** and then distributed by them to the General Practitioners (GPs) and to the maternity hospitals/wards (in particular doses for BCG and HBV1). These immunizations (vaccine and application) are provided **free of charge** for the population. As a rule, most of the immunizations are administered in the private sector by the GPs. Newborn immunizations (BCG and HBV1) are administered by physicians in neonatology wards in the maternity hospitals/wards. As an exception, mandatory immunizations could be administered as well as by physicians in the Immunization Facilities located in the Regional Inspectorates for Protection and Control of Public Health and in other health care facilities.

The **recommended immunizations** (vaccine and application) are paid by the patients. The vaccines for the recommended immunizations are available and sold on the private market. These vaccines are offered and administered in the National Immunization Center to the National Center of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (NCIPD), in the Immunization facilities located in each Regional Inspectorate for Protection and Control of Public Health and also by the GPs (with the exception of Yellow fever vaccine, which is to be administered only in 5 Immunization Facilities approved by the Minister of Health). The organization, management and control of all activities related to the immunizations such as vaccine planning, supplying, storage, administration, usage and accounting of vaccines are accomplished by: 1) the Ministry of Health at national level and 2) Regional Inspectorates for Protection and Control of Public Health at regional level.

The surveillance and control of VPDs and immunization coverage monitoring and analysis at regional level are performed by the Regional Inspectorates for Protection and Control of Public Health. Evaluation of the national immunization coverage and epidemiological

surveillance of VPD at national level is performed by the Department of epidemiology and CD surveillance at the NCIPD, which prepares and presents to the Ministry of Health a national annual analysis.

Traditionally the vaccine coverage in Bulgaria is quite high and there are no significant discrepancies across regions. The national average for 2005 is shown in Table 2.

The National Immunization Calendar approved by the Minister is an official document in force for the entire country and is not to be modified at the regional level. All supplementary immunization activities, even only at regional level are to be ordered by the Minister.

The current Bulgarian immunization schedule is shown in Table 1. The previous one, as published on the EUVAC Web site, has been slightly changed. The changes are related to the targeted age groups and Td immunization for adults, replacing now TT immunization for people ≥ 25 years of age.

There is a national **Expert committee for epidemiological surveillance, immunoprophylaxis and control of communicable diseases** responsible for advising the Ministry, including regarding national immunization policy and proposing changes in the National Immunization Calendar. However, the final decision is taken by the Minister. Vaccines used at present in Bulgaria are both imported – OPV, HBV and MMR and locally produced – BCG (and PPD), DwPT, DT and Td.

Table 1

Immunization Schedule in Bulgaria

(Regulation No. 15 for the immunizations in Bulgaria /12.05.2005)

Age	Vaccines						
	BCG	Hep B	OPV	DTwP	MMR	DT	Td
At birth	Yes	Yes					
1 month		Yes					
2 months			Yes	Yes			
3 months			Yes	Yes			
4 months			Yes	Yes			
6 months		Yes					
7 months	Yes ¹						
13 months					Yes		
14 months			Yes				
22 months			Yes				
24 months				Yes			
7 years	Yes ²		Yes			Yes	
11 years	Yes ²						
12 years					Yes		Yes
17 years	Yes ²						Yes
25 and every 10 years							Yes

¹ Only for children without scar after first shot and Mantoux negative (using Purified Protein Derivative)

² Only for those Mantoux negative (using Purified Protein Derivative)

Table 2**National Immunization coverage in Bulgaria in 2005**

Vaccines	National coverage (percent)
BCG – birth dose	97.9
HepB1 – birth dose	98.6
DTP1	96.8
DTP3	95.6
DTP4	94.0
OPV3	96.6
HepB3	96.0
MMR1	96.2
MMR2	92.4