

FOUR IS BETTER THAN NINE. A COMBINED DIPHTHERIA-TETANUS-PERTUSSIS-HEPATITIS B-*HAEMOPHILUS INFLUENZAE* TYPE B VACCINE FOR ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract. Malaysian infants would have to receive nine injections during the first few months of life in order to be protected against disease caused by hepatitis B (HBV), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) if single HBV and Hib vaccines were used. We evaluated a combined DTPw-HBV/Hib vaccine administered at 1.5, 3 and 5 months after a birth dose of hepatitis B vaccine (HBV). One month after completion of the primary vaccination, 99% of subjects had seroprotective anti-HBV antibody levels, and at least 98% had seroprotective antibodies against diphtheria, tetanus, and Hib, and were seropositive for pertussis antibodies. The immune response to the combined vaccine was comparable to that induced by separate injections with DTPw, HBV and Hib vaccines. Overall, the DTPw-HBV/Hib vaccine was as well tolerated as separate administration of DTPw, HBV and Hib vaccines. The combined DTPw-HBV/Hib vaccine induces protection against five diseases as recommended in the Malaysian routine vaccination schedule. Use of the combined DTPw-HBV/Hib vaccine can reduce the required number of injections from nine to four in the first few months of life.

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