Current Status and Improvements of Japan's Immunization System

Balancing Public Health and Respect for Individuals

Progress of the Immunization System in Social Context

1948
Mandatory Vaccination (with Penalties)

Preventing Social Losses from Infectious Disease Outbreaks

1976–1994
Shift Toward Individual Choice

Vaccine Injury Concerns Became a Social Issue
→ Shift to a “Duty to Endeavor”

2020–
Flexible Operation Based on the Situation

COVID-19 Temporary Vaccination
→ Reclassified as Category B after transition to Class 5

Source: Changes in the Immunization System and Social Context (reference material)

Framework of Routine Vaccinations (Category A / Category B)

Category A Diseases (Community Protection)

Purpose: Prevent outbreaks and spread in normal times

Public involvement: Vaccination recommendation / Duty to endeavor

Cost: Covered by national and municipal governments (generally no out-of-pocket cost)

RSV vaccine; rotavirus vaccine
Pentavalent vaccine; pneumococcal vaccine (children)
Hepatitis B vaccine; BCG vaccine
MR (measles–rubella) vaccine;
varicella vaccine
Japanese encephalitis vaccine; HPV vaccine

Category B Diseases (Individual Protection)

Purpose: Prevent illness onset and severe disease in individuals

Public involvement: No vaccination recommendation / No duty to endeavor

Cost: Partially subsidized by municipalities (some individual payment may be needed)

Pneumococcal vaccine (older adults)
Herpes zoster (shingles) vaccine
Influenza vaccine (older adults)
COVID-19 vaccine (older adults)

WHO-Recommended Vaccines and Japan's Coverage (Closing the "Vaccine Gap")

Japan

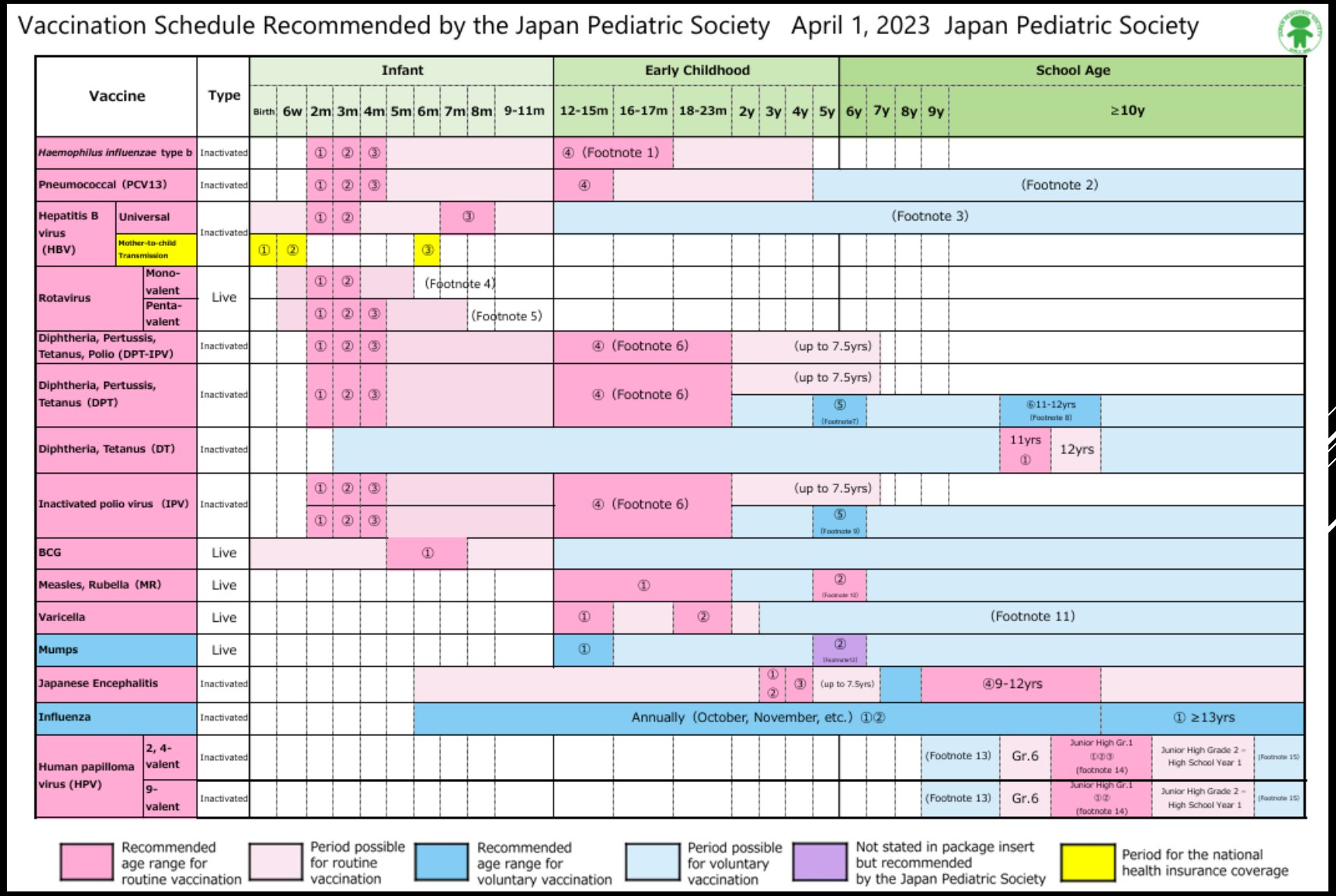
WHO-Recommended Vaccines	Japan	United Kingdom	United States	Germany	France	Italy	Canada
BCG (tuberculosis)	○	△	×	×	△	×	×
Polio	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
DTP (pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Measles	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Rubella	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hepatitis B	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pneumococcal (children)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
HPV	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Rotavirus	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Japanese encephalitis	○	×	×	×	×	×	×
Mumps	×	○	○	○	○	○	○
Varicella	○	×	○	○	×	○	○
Influenza	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pneumococcal (adults)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Herpes zoster (shingles)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

○: Implemented as publicly funded vaccination (routine vaccination in Japan) ×: Not implemented (under assessment) △: High-risk groups only

<As of April 2025 (Reiwa 7): MHLW Health Bureau, Infectious Disease Control Division, Immunization Section>

Children Routine Immunization Schedule

- ✓ Starts at 2 months of age: pediatric pneumococcal, hepatitis B, pentavalent, and rotavirus vaccines
- ✓ A continuous schedule is designed from infancy through school age
- ✓ Municipal notices, questionnaires, and vouchers support timely vaccination visits



<Vaccination schedule recommended by the Japan Pediatric Society April 1, 2023>

Japan's Immunization Coverage in International Comparison (2024)

	Measles		Rubella	DTP		Polio		Hib	PCV	HPV		
dise:	1st	2nd	1st	1st	3rd	1st	3rd	3rd	3rd	girls 1st	boys 1st	**Average**
Many Vaccine Mandates	93%	91%	93%	96%	94%	96%	94%	94%	91%	65%	59%	88%
Australia (13vaccines)	91%	92%	91%	93%	93%	93%	94%	93%	95%	73%	70%	89%
France (11)	95%	93%	95%	99%	96%	99%	96%	96%	96%	58%	37%	96%
Italy (10)	95%	84%	95%	94%	94%	94%	94%	95%	90%	66%	59%	87%
United States(# varies by state)	92%	95%	92%	98%	94%	97%	93%	92%	84%	74%	70%	89%
No Vaccine Mandates	93%	89%	93%	98%	94%	96%	94%	94%	89%	74%	71%	89%
Austria	90%	84%	90%	95%	85%	95%	85%	85%	…	53%	42%	80%
Denmark	94%	93%	94%	97%	96%	97%	96%	96%	96%	89%	87%	94%
Finland	94%	92%	94%	97%	91%	97%	91%	91%	87%	71%	63%	88%
Greece	91%	71%	91%	98%	95%	98%	95%	99%	90%	…	…	92%
Ireland	90%	90%	90%	93%	92%	93%	92%	92%	84%	73%	69%	87%
Japan	95%	96%	95%	99%	99%	98%	98%	96%	91%	39%	…	91%
Netherlands	89%	81%	89%	91%	91%	91%	91%	89%	88%	63%	59%	84%
New Zealand	89%	87%	89%	94%	89%	99%	97%	89%	60%	53%	52%	82%
Norway	96%	94%	96%	99%	97%	99%	97%	97%	95%	93%	92%	96%
Portgal	99%	96%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	98%	91%	88%	97%
Spain	97%	92%	97%	98%	94%	98%	94%	94%	92%	90%	83%	94%
Sweden	93%	92%	93%	97%	96%	97%	95%	95%	94%	91%	87%	94%
Switzerland	96%	93%	96%	97%	96%	97%	96%	95%	91%	78%	64%	91%
United Kingdom	89%	85%	89%	92%	92%	92%	92%	92%	89%	75%	70%	87%
Partial Vaccine Mandates												
Belgium (only polio)	96%	82%	96%	98%	97%	99%	98%	97%	94%	80%	73%	92%
Canada (2/10 provinces)	92%	79%	92%	92%	92%	92%	92%	90%	85%	86%	81%	88%
Germany (only measles)	96%	92%	96%	97%	89%	97%	88%	88%	75%	68%	46%	85%

Source: WHO/UNICEF estimates (2024) and reference material (CDC comparison)

WHO Estimates National Immunization Coverage For Some Core Vaccines in 2024.

Coverage of major childhood vaccinations in 12 cities participating in the Countermeasures to Combat Infectious Diseases in Asia Project (CCIDA)

			Rota	BCG	Measles		Rubella	DTP		Polio		Hib	PCV	HPV	
		dose:			1st	2nd	1st	1st	3rd	1st	3rd	3rd	3rd	girls 1st	Average
	Bangkok	Kingdom of Thailand	75%	99%	93%	87%	93%	96%	92%	92%	93%	83%	…	57%	87%
	Delhi	Republic of India	92%	91%	97%	92%	97%	96%	94%	93%	93%	94%	95%	…	94%
	Hanoi	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam	…	96%	98%	95%	95%	99%	97%	93%	73%	97%	…	…	94%
	Jakarta	Republic of Indonesia	71%	88%	85%	82%	85%	83%	78%	81%	87%	69%	70%	89%	81%
	Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	…	90%	96%	93%	96%	93%	93%	93%	93%	93%	90%	78%	92%
	Metro Manila	Republic of the Philippines	…	86%	80%	71%	80%	82%	71%	82%	88%	71%	59%	50%	75%
	Seoul	Republic of Korea	94%	97%	97%	96%	97%	98%	97%	98%	97%	97%	97%	85%	96%
	Singapore	Republic of Singapore	…	95%	97%	93%	97%	98%	97%	98%	97%	97%	91%	78%	94%
	Taipei	Taiwan	93%	97%	97%	96%	97%	98%	97%	98%	97%	97%	96%	90%	96%
	Tomsk	Russian Federation	…	96%	97%	93%	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%	96%	94%	…	96%
	Yangon	Republic of the Union of Myanmar	67%	79%	71%	68%	71%	76%	71%	73%	71%	71%	71%	83%	73%
	Tokyo	Japan	94%	97%	95%	96%	95%	99%	98%	98%	98%	96%	91%	39%	91%
	<reference> Beijing	People's Republic of China	…	99%	95%	95%	95%	97%	97%	97%	97%	…	…	…	97%

(Source) WHO Vaccine Dashboard, Taiwan CDC

Children's Vaccination Schedule in 12 Cities Participating in the Countermeasures to Combat Infectious Diseases in Asia (CCIDA)

		Rotavirus	Diphtheria	Tetanus	Pertussis	Pollio	Hib	Tuberculosis	Japanese Encephalitis	Hepatitis A	Hepatitis B	Pneumococcal	Measles	Mumps	Rubella	Varicella	HPV	Meningococcal	Influenza	Covid-19	
Bangkok	Kingdom of Thailand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		○	○	○		○		○		14
Delhi	Republic of India	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	△		○	○	○		○		○				12
Hanoi	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam		○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		○		○						10
Jakarta	Republic of Indonesia	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	△		○	○	○		○		○				12
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia		○	○	○	○	○	○	△		○	○	○	○	○		○				12
Metro Manila	Republic of the Philippines		○	○	○	○	○	○			○	○	○	○	○		○				12
Seoul	Republic of Korea	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		17
Singapore	Republic of Singapore		○	○	○	○	○	○			○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		14
Taipei	Taiwan		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○		16
Tomsk	Russian Federation		○	○	○	○	○	○			○	○	○	○	○				○		12
Yangon	Republic of the Union of Myanmar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○		○		○				13
Tokyo	Japan	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○		○	○	○		○	○	○				14
		6	12	12	12	12	12	12	6	2	12	10	12	7	12	4	10	0	4		
<reference> Beijing	People's Republic of China		○	○	○	○		○	○	○	○		○	○	○		○	○			13

A System that Builds Confidence: Vaccine Injury Relief Program & Summary

Vaccine Injury Relief Program (established in 1976)

A national safety net for rare health injuries following vaccination

Provides benefits (medical expenses, disability pensions, etc.) after application and review

○ Routine vaccinations

Year	Reviewed	Approved	Denied
2022	87	70	17
2023	117	100	17
2024	115	83	32

○ COVID-19 (special temporary vaccination)

Year	Reviewed	Approved	Denied
2022	1,568	1,362	206
2023	5,988	4,783	1,205
2024	4,317	2,236	2,081

<MHLW: Number of approved cases>

Summary

- ✓ The system shifted over time from “mandatory” to greater respect for individual decision-making
- ✓ High coverage is maintained without coercion, supported by municipalities
- ✓ The relief program provides reassurance and public trust