

Grade 6 Immunizations in B.C.

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

Vaccines are the best way to protect your child against many diseases and their complications. When you get your child immunized, you help protect others as well.

The hepatitis B, meningococcal C and chickenpox vaccines are offered to all students in grade 6. The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is offered to female students.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations that your child has received, and to ensure that they have had all doses of the recommended childhood vaccines that they are eligible for. If you have any questions, please speak with your health care provider or visit www.immunizebc.ca for more information.

What is the hepatitis B vaccine?

The hepatitis B vaccine protects against the hepatitis B virus. Most children in grade 6 will have been immunized against hepatitis B infection at a younger age and do not need any more doses of the vaccine. Children who have not been immunized will be provided with 2 doses of the vaccine given 6 months apart. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #25a Hepatitis B Vaccine](#).

What is hepatitis B infection?

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. It can cause serious health problems including permanent liver damage (cirrhosis). Hepatitis B is also one of the main causes of liver cancer, which can be fatal.

Hepatitis B virus is spread from one infected person to another by contact with blood or body fluids. This includes an accidental or intentional poke with a used needle, being splashed in the mouth, nose, or eyes with infected blood, being bitten by an infected person, sharing blood-contaminated items such as a toothbrush, dental floss or razor, or intimate sexual contact. The virus is not spread through casual contact such as hugging, kissing, sneezing or coughing.

What is the meningococcal C vaccine?

The meningococcal C vaccine protects against infection from meningococcal bacteria type C. One dose of the vaccine is offered to all children in grade 6. This dose is a booster dose for those who were immunized against meningococcal C infection at a younger age. Children who have never received the vaccine should also get 1 dose. If your child had a dose of the vaccine on or after their 10th birthday, they do not need a dose in grade 6. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #23a Meningococcal C Conjugate \(Men-C\) Vaccine](#).

What is meningococcal C infection?

Meningococcal bacteria type C can cause serious and life-threatening infections such as meningitis (an infection of the lining that covers the brain), and septicemia (an infection of the blood). For every 100 children who get infected, up to 15 may die. Permanent complications of infection include brain damage and deafness.

Meningococcal infection is spread from one person to another by coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact. It can also be spread through saliva by kissing, or sharing of food, drinks, cigarettes, lipstick, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports, and mouthpieces of musical instruments.

What is the chickenpox vaccine?

The chickenpox (varicella) vaccine protects against chickenpox disease and its complications. Most children in grade 6 will have received 1 dose of the vaccine on or after their 1st birthday. A 2nd dose of vaccine is provided to all students in grade 6 to strengthen their immunity to chickenpox disease. Children who have never received the vaccine should get 2 doses at least 3 months apart.

If your child had chickenpox before their 1st birthday, they should still get the vaccine as they may not have developed long-lasting immunity and they could get chickenpox again. However, your child does not need the vaccine if they had chickenpox or shingles diagnosed by a health care provider at 1 year of age or older, or if they have received 2 doses of the vaccine. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #44b Chickenpox \(Varicella\) Vaccine](#).

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox is an infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus. Infection can be very severe in newborns, teenagers, adults, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems.

Complications from chickenpox include pneumonia (lung infection), encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), and bacterial infections of the skin. Encephalitis can lead to seizures, deafness, or brain damage. About 1 in 3,000 adults who get chickenpox die from the infection.

The virus is spread through the air by an infected person sneezing or coughing. It can also be spread through contact with the fluid from chickenpox blisters or an infected person's saliva, such as by sharing food or drinks or kissing.

What is the HPV Vaccine?

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, used in the B.C. grade 6 program is Gardasil®. It protects against 2 types of HPV (types 16 and 18) that cause about 70% of cervical cancers and several other cancers such as cancers of the vagina, vulva, anus, penis, mouth and throat. It also protects against 2 types of

HPV (types 6 and 11) that cause about 90% of cases of genital warts. The vaccine is provided to grade 6 girls as 2 doses given at least 6 months apart.

The HPV vaccine is also approved for use in boys, but it is not routinely provided for free in B.C. Contact your health care provider for more information. For more information on the HPV vaccine, see [HealthLinkBC File #101b Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) Vaccines](#).

What is HPV and who can get it?

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and 3 out of 4 sexually active people will get HPV at some time. Anyone who has any kind of sexual activity with another person involving oral, genital or anal contact can get HPV. Sexual intercourse is not necessary to get infected.

Every year in B.C. approximately:

- 175 women will get cervical cancer and 50 will die from the disease.
- 6,000 women will develop high risk changes to the cervix which are precancerous.
- Over 500,000 women will undergo Pap tests and over 20,000 will need further follow-up which may include additional Pap tests and other procedures to stop cancer of the cervix from developing.

People are best protected when they get the HPV vaccine before they become sexually active. In women who have never been infected with HPV, Gardasil® prevents almost 100% of cases of cancer of the cervix caused by HPV types 16 and 18 and genital warts caused by HPV types 6 and 11.

What are the possible reactions after these vaccines?

Common reactions may include soreness, redness and swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given. Headache and mild fever may also occur. A rash which looks like chickenpox but with fewer spots can occur about 2 weeks after getting the chickenpox vaccine. The rash is usually 2 to 3 small blisters in the skin near where the needle was given but may sometimes appear on other parts of the body. Very rarely, an immunized person who develops a rash after vaccination can spread the virus from the chickenpox vaccine to others. To prevent spreading the virus to others the rash should be covered until the blisters have dried and crusted over.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. Should this reaction occur, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

It is important to always report all serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Acetaminophen or Tylenol® can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye Syndrome](#).

Who should not get a vaccine?

A vaccine is not recommended for:

- People who have had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of vaccine, or to any component of the vaccine including yeast (in the hepatitis B and HPV vaccines), latex (in some hepatitis B and meningococcal C vaccines), neomycin and gelatin (in some chickenpox vaccines).
- Some people who have an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment should not receive chickenpox vaccine.
- People who have had a blood transfusion or received other blood products may need to wait up to 11 months before receiving the chickenpox vaccine, depending on which blood product they received.
- People with active untreated tuberculosis should not get the chickenpox vaccine.
- Women who are pregnant should not receive the chickenpox or HPV vaccines.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns, speak with your health care provider.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Efforts are first made to seek parental/guardian or representative consent prior to immunization. However, children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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