

Vaccination and your child

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child against many dangerous diseases. In Canada, vaccines prevent illnesses such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, *Haemophilus influenzae* type B (Hib), measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis B.

There are also vaccines available to protect children against chickenpox (varicella), pneumococcal and meningococcal diseases, as well as diseases caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) and rotavirus gastroenteritis (a common cause of severe diarrhea in children under 3 years).

Not all of these vaccines are covered by every provincial or territorial health plan. Depending on where you live, you may have to pay for some of them.



What vaccines should my child receive?

Your child should receive all the recommended vaccines (“shots”). The timing for each shot may be slightly different depending on where you live. Here is what the Canadian Paediatric Society and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization currently recommend:

- **5-in-1** (also known as DTP-Hib), **DPT-polio**, or **Hib vaccine**: These vaccines protect against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, and Hib disease.
- **MMR**: This vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella.
- **Hepatitis B**
- **dTap**: This is a booster vaccine for teens that protects against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough).
- **Chickenpox** (varicella)
- **Pneumococcal** vaccine: Protects against infections caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, including meningitis (a brain infection), pneumonia, and ear infections.
- **Meningococcal** vaccine: Protects against diseases caused by the *meningococcus* bacteria, including meningitis and septicemia, a serious blood infection.
- **HPV** vaccine: Protects girls from several types of HPV that cause cervical cancer and genital warts.
- **Rotavirus**: Protects infants against rotavirus, the most common cause of serious diarrhea in babies and young children. This vaccine is given orally.

Should my child receive any other vaccines?

The CPS recommends that children over 6 months old get a flu shot each year. The current vaccine doesn't work in children younger than 6 months old.

The flu vaccine is especially important for children who are at high risk of complications from the flu. These are children with heart or lung problems (like cystic fibrosis or asthma), chronic conditions like diabetes, or children who have to be treated for long periods of time with ASA (Aspirin).

Flu shots are usually given once a year, between October and mid-November. The shots provide protection throughout the flu season, which usually lasts from October to March.

- Children **under the age of 9 years** of age who have **never** had a flu shot will need two doses of the vaccine, given at least 4 weeks apart.
- Children who had one or more doses of the flu shot in the past will need only one dose this year.

If you are planning to travel, you should also speak to your doctor about whether your child will need any other shots.

Are vaccines safe?

Vaccines are very safe. There are rarely reasons not to get vaccinated.

- If your child had an allergic reaction to a vaccine—such as breathing problems, severe swelling of the skin or mouth—talk to your doctor before the next shot.
- In the past, the flu vaccine was not recommended for children with an egg allergy. Research has shown that, in most cases, it is okay for children with egg allergies to get the vaccine. If your child has an egg allergy, talk to your doctor about getting the vaccine.
- With any vaccine, there may be some redness, swelling or pain at the place where the needle went into the arm or leg.
- Some children may have a fever after a vaccine. Ask your doctor what to give for the fever or pain.
- If your child is very sick when it's time for a vaccine, talk to your doctor.

How can I lessen the pain?

Needles can hurt. To lessen the pain you can:

- Apply a topical anaesthetic (a cream that causes temporary numbness) an hour before getting the needle. You may have to confirm with your doctor where the shot will be given (for example, the arm or the leg). Your pharmacist can help you find the cream.
- Give your baby sugar water (with a teaspoon or pacifier) just before the shot, or nurse your baby while he gets the needle.
- Use distractions (blow bubbles, read a book), suggest deep breathing, remain calm and physically comfort your child (cuddle, hold hands) during the needle.
- If your child is crying or fussy after getting the shot, you can give her acetaminophen (such as Tylenol or Tempra).

Childhood immunization schedule

For information on which vaccines are covered and when in your province visit:
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/is-vc-eng.php.

Age at vaccination	Birth	2 months	4 months	6 months	12 months	18 months	4-6 years	9-13 years	14-16 years
Diphtheria Pertussis Tetanus Poliomyelitis		X	X	X		X	X		
Hib ¹		X	X	X		X			
Rotavirus ²	Infancy (2 or 3 doses between 6 weeks and 32 weeks of age).								
Mumps Measles Rubella					X		X ³ or X ³		
Tetanus Diphtheria Pertussis									X
Hepatitis B ⁴	Infancy or							X	
Chickenpox (Varicella) ⁵					X		X		
Pneumococcal		X	X	X	X				
Meningococcal conjugate ⁶	12 months and a booster dose at 12 years								
Flu	All children over 6 months								
HPV ⁷								X	

Notes:

1. *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) requires several shots. Your doctor will let you know how many and when they will be given.
2. Your child will need 2 or 3 doses depending on the vaccine. Doses are given at least 4 weeks apart.
3. Children need 2 doses of MMR. The second dose is given either at 18 months or 4-6 years of age.
4. Hepatitis B requires several shots. Some provinces and territories offer them at a younger age.
5. Teens who have not had chickenpox or who are not fully immunized get 2 doses, 1 month apart.
6. Provinces and territories have different schedules for this vaccine. Children at higher risk for meningococcal infection should receive a conjugate meningococcal C vaccine (MCV) as a baby and MCV4 at 2 years of age. Teens should receive a booster dose with MCV4 or conjugate MCV at about 12 years of age.
7. For girls only. The second dose is given 2 months after the first, and the third dose after 6 months.

Where can I get more information?

- Talk to your doctor or public health nurse if you have questions about vaccines or your child's health.
- For information on your child's health while travelling, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada's website. www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/index-eng.php
- The CPS has also published a book for parents called *Your Child's Best Shot: A Parent's Guide to Vaccination*. To order visit www.cps.ca or call 613-526-9397.