

## 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, chickenpox (varicella), and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine are offered to all students in grade 6.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations that your child has received. Make sure 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 ImmunizeBC: <https://immunizebc.ca/>

### 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 spreads through contact with blood or body fluids from a person infected with the virus. This includes a 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 chickenpox (varicella) vaccine?

The chickenpox vaccine protects against chickenpox disease and its complications. Most children in grade 6 should have received 2 doses of the vaccine at a younger age and do not need any more doses. 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. Your child does not need the vaccine if they had chickenpox or shingles, confirmed by a lab test, at 1 year of age or older. 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 spreads through the air by an infected person sneezing or coughing. It can also spread through contact with the fluid from chickenpox blisters. Contact with an infected person's saliva, such as by sharing food or drinks or kissing, can also spread the virus.

### What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine provides protection against 9 types of HPV that cause various cancers and genital warts. It protects against 7 types of HPV that cause about 90% 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 that cause about 90% of cases of genital warts. The vaccine is provided as 2 doses given at least 6 months apart. For more information, 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:

- 200 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
- 110 people will get anal cancer and 20 will die from the disease
- 5,500 people will develop genital warts

People are best protected when they get the HPV vaccine before they become sexually active. The vaccine prevents almost 100% of cases of cancer of the cervix and 90% to 100% of cases of genital warts caused by the HPV types covered by the vaccine.

### 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, fever and fatigue 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 a few small blisters in the skin near where the vaccine was given. Sometimes it may appear on other parts of the body. Very rarely, a person who develops a rash after being immunized can spread the virus from the chickenpox vaccine. To prevent spreading it to others, cover the rash 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 (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen\* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

\*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

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 vaccines), neomycin and gelatin (in some chickenpox vaccines)
- Some people who have an immune system weakened by disease or medical treatment should not receive the 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. 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 information on mature minor consent see [HealthLinkBC File # 119 The Infants Act, Mature Minor Consent and Immunization](#).



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority