



Childhood Vaccines are Safe

Protect your children. Get all their shots on time. The shots are free.
Call your local public health unit or health care provider to make an appointment.

Check what you know.

Circle yes or no to the following sentences about vaccine safety.

I know that vaccines are safe for my baby.	Yes	No
I know vaccines are so safe that my baby can get more than one shot at a time.	Yes	No
I know every batch of vaccine is tested for safety.	Yes	No
I know vaccines are safe because they do not cause autism, multiple sclerosis, or diabetes.	Yes	No
I know vaccines are checked for side effects.	Yes	No

If you have answered 'no' to any of the above, read on to learn more.

Vaccines are safe

Vaccines are safe for your child. Some are made from weakened or dead germs such as bacteria or viruses, and some are made from proteins. Vaccines allow your child to build protection from harmful germs without getting the disease.

Like healthy food and clean water, vaccines help keep your child healthy. All vaccines used in B.C. are approved by Health Canada, and every batch is tested before it can be used.

Vaccines are tested for many years

Making a new vaccine that is effective and safe for your child takes many years. Vaccines must pass many safety tests before they are ever given to people.

When a new vaccine is ready to be tested in people, it is first given to a small number of people to check the dose and its safety. It is then given to larger numbers, such as hundreds or thousands of people, to make sure it is safe and effective. If there are people who should not

receive the vaccine because of safety concerns, this is specified when the vaccine is approved.

After a vaccine has been approved for use, its safety is monitored. Every batch or 'lot' of vaccine is tested and approved by Health Canada before it is used. Adverse events following immunization are reported in each province and territory of Canada, as well as to the federal government and World Health Organization. Rates of these events are analyzed, and every serious event is reviewed in detail.

It is safer to get vaccinated than to get the disease

The danger from the disease is much greater than the risk of a side effect from the vaccine. Health officials around the world take vaccine safety very seriously. That is why every parent is asked to call the public health nurse or family doctor if any unusual or unexpected side effects happen after getting the vaccines.

A life-threatening allergic reaction after getting a vaccine is rare – only a one in a million chance.

If this happens, it is most likely to occur within minutes after the vaccine is given. This is why you are asked to stay at the clinic or doctor's office for 15 minutes afterwards. The nurse or doctor is prepared to treat this reaction.

It is safe for your child to get more than one vaccine at a time

Even when your child gets several vaccines at the same time, most side effects will be mild and will last for only a day or two. Common side effects may include a low fever or soreness where the shot was given.

Millions of vaccines are given every year in Canada. The vaccines are very safe. Serious side effects from vaccines are very rare.

Vaccines do not cause illness or disease

The best available scientific evidence indicates that vaccines do not cause autism, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or other illnesses. These studies are posted on the Institute of Medicine website at www.iom.edu/Reports.aspx?activity={43C096A7-F094-43D0-985A-B6BF561A7C5D}.

Newer vaccines are safer

Advances in science have improved how vaccines are made. Vaccines now contain fewer substances to stimulate just the part of the immune system needed to provide protection. The best example of such a change is the whooping cough vaccine. The 'whole cell' vaccine used before 1997 contained about 3,000 proteins and polysaccharides (complex sugars) from the whole whooping cough bacterium. The vaccines used in Canada today contain only 3 to 5 proteins. These stimulate only the parts of the immune system needed for giving protection, and they cause fewer side effects.

For more information

Immunize BC: www.immunizebc.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada:
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/vs-sv/index.html

Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion:
<http://immunize.ca/en/default.aspx>

More HealthLink BC Files on childhood immunization:

[#50a Your Baby's Immune System and Vaccines](#)

[#50b The Benefits of Vaccinating Your Child](#)

[#50d Childhood Vaccines: What is in the Vaccines and Why](#)

[#50e A Better Immunization Experience for Your Child](#)

For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm 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.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
AN AGENCY OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY