



Childhood vaccines are safe

Protect your children. Get all their vaccines on time. The vaccines are free.

Call your local public health unit or health care provider to make an appointment.

Check what **you know**.

Answer **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 vaccine 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.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. 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 and/or polysaccharides (complex sugars). 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.

Are vaccines tested?

Yes. 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, or possible side effects, 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 adverse events are analyzed and every serious event is reviewed in detail.

Is it safer to get immunized than to get the disease?

Yes. 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 their health care provider if any unusual or unexpected side effects happen after getting the vaccines.

There is an extremely rare possibility, less than one in million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction after getting a vaccine. 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 health care provider's office for 15 minutes after your child has been immunized. Your health care provider is prepared to treat this reaction.

Is it safe for your child to get more than one vaccine at a time?

Yes. 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 vaccine was given.

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

Do vaccines cause illness or disease?

No. 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 at the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies
www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports.aspx.

Are newer vaccines safer than older vaccines?

Yes. 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 pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine. The 'whole cell' vaccine used before 1997 contained about 3,000 proteins and polysaccharides from the whole pertussis bacterium. The vaccines used in Canada today contain only 3 to 5 proteins. These stimulate only the parts of the immune system needed for protection, and they cause fewer side effects.

For more information

For more information on immunizations, visit ImmunizeBC <https://immunizebc.ca/>.

For more information on childhood immunization, see:

- [HealthLinkBC File #50a Your baby's immune system and vaccines](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50b The benefits of immunizing your child](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50d Childhood vaccines: What is in the vaccines and why](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #50e A better immunization experience for your child](#)



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/more/resources/healthlink-bc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.