

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 human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is offered to all students in grade 6. The vaccine has been shown to protect against various cancers caused by HPV. Your child may be offered other vaccines if they have not had all doses of the recommended childhood vaccines that they are eligible for. For more information on the recommended childhood vaccines in B.C., see the B.C. Immunization Schedules at www.healthlinkbc.ca/bc-immunization-schedules.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations that your child has received. If your child received any vaccines outside of B.C., you can update their vaccine record at www.immunizationrecord.gov.bc.ca.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine provides protection against cancers and genital warts caused by 9 types of HPV. It protects against 7 types of HPV that cause about 90 percent 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 percent of cases of genital warts. The vaccine is provided as 2 doses given at least 6 months apart. Children with a weakened immune system need 3 doses of the vaccine. For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #101b Human Papillomavirus \(HPV\) vaccines](#).

Why is the HPV vaccine given in grade 6?

The HPV vaccine is given in grade 6 because:

- The vaccine works better at a younger age. Preteens make more antibodies after getting the vaccine than older teens or adults. This provides long-lasting protection against HPV

- The vaccine works best when it is given before being exposed to the virus
- Children in grade 6 only need 2 doses of the vaccine to be protected. Children 15 years of age and older, adults, and those with weakened immune systems need 3 doses

What is HPV and who can get it?

HPV is a very common virus that spreads through intimate skin-to-skin contact. 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. HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs). About 3 out of 4 sexually active people who are unimmunized will get HPV at some time.

Every year in B.C. approximately:

- 210 people will get cervical cancer and 55 will die from the disease
- 6,000 people will develop high risk changes to the cervix which are precancerous
- 135 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 percent of cases of cervical cancer and 90 to 100 percent of cases of genital warts caused by the HPV types covered by the vaccine.

What are the possible reactions after the vaccine?

Common reactions may include soreness, redness and swelling in the arm where the vaccine was given. Headache and fever may also occur.

Serious reactions to the vaccine are rare. Over 15 years of vaccine safety monitoring has shown that

the HPV vaccine is safe. More than 200 million doses of the vaccine have been safely given worldwide.

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

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. If this reaction occurs, 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 report all serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the vaccine?

The vaccine is not recommended for:

- People who have had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of vaccine, or to any part of the vaccine, including yeast
- People who are pregnant

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.

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.

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](#).

For more information

For tips on how to help your child have a positive immunization experience visit ImmunizeBC at <https://immunizebc.ca/children/have-positive-experience/tips-school-age-teens>.



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.