

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 protects against various cancers caused by HPV. Children may be offered other vaccines if they have not had all doses of the recommended childhood vaccines. For more information on the recommended childhood vaccines in B.C., visit the B.C. immunization schedules at www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-library/immunizations/schedules/children.

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 protects against several 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. Students in grade 6 get one dose of the vaccine. If they have a weakened immune system, they need 3 doses. For more information, visit [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 and children only need one dose to be protected. 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

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:

- 230 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
- 140 people will get anal cancer and 25 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, fever, nausea, dizziness, tiredness, diarrhea and muscle soreness may also occur.

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.

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

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.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine. There is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This happens in less than one in a million people who get the vaccine. Symptoms 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.

Always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the vaccine?

You should not get the vaccine if you have had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine, or to any part of the vaccine, including yeast.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. 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 can 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 visit [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 [HealthLink BC: Have a positive experience: Tips for school-age children & teens](#).



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/health-library/healthlinkbc-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.