

Grade 9 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 meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccine and Tdap vaccine are offered to all students in grade 9.

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 at www.immunizebc.ca.

What is the meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccine?

The meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccine protects against infection from 4 types of meningococcal bacteria: types A, C, Y and W. It replaces the meningococcal C (Men-C) vaccine that was previously offered to students in grade 6. Children should get the meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccine in grade 9 even if they received the Men-C vaccine in grade 6.

For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #23b Meningococcal Quadrivalent Vaccines](#).

What is meningococcal infection?

Meningococcal infection is caused by bacteria. Meningococcal infection due to types A, C, Y and W is very rare in B.C. Although rare, it can cause serious and life-threatening infections including meningitis, an infection of the lining that covers the brain, and septicemia, an infection of the blood. For every 100 people who get sick, up to

10 to 15 will die, even if they receive treatment. Permanent complications of infection include brain damage, deafness and loss of limbs.

Meningococcal infection spreads from one person to another by coughing, sneezing or close face-to-face contact. It may spread through saliva by kissing, or sharing of food, drinks, cigarettes, lipstick, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports and mouthpieces of musical instruments.

What is the Tdap vaccine?

The Tdap vaccine protects against 3 diseases:

- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Pertussis (or whooping cough)

The Tdap vaccine offered in grade 9 is a booster dose for children who were immunized against these diseases at a younger age. The booster dose strengthens or boosts the immune system to give better protection against these diseases. If your child had a dose of Tdap vaccine on or after their 10th birthday, they do not need a dose in grade 9.

For more information, see [HealthLinkBC File #18c Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis \(Tdap\) Vaccine](#).

What are tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis?

Tetanus, also known as lockjaw, is caused by bacteria mostly found in the soil. When the bacteria enter the skin through a cut or scrape, they produce a poison that can cause painful tightening of muscles all over the body. It is very serious if the breathing muscles are affected. Up to 1 in 5 people who get tetanus may die.

Diphtheria is a serious infection of the nose and throat caused by diphtheria bacteria. The bacteria are spread through the air by people sneezing or coughing or by direct skin-to-skin contact. The disease can result in very severe breathing problems. It can also cause heart failure and paralysis. About 1 in 10 people who get diphtheria may die.

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a serious infection of the airways caused by pertussis bacteria. Pertussis can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage or death. These complications are seen most often in infants. The bacteria are easily spread by coughing, sneezing or close face-to-face contact. Pertussis can cause severe coughing that often ends with a whooping sound before the next breath. This cough can last several months and occurs more often at night.

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, fatigue, muscle or joint soreness, chills, nausea and mild fever may also occur.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any immunization 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 part of the vaccine
- People who developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 8 weeks of getting a tetanus vaccine, without another cause being identified, should not get the Tdap vaccine. GBS is a rare condition that can result in weakness and paralysis of the body's muscles. It most commonly occurs after infections. In rare cases, GBS can also occur after some 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](#).

