



School Immunization Program

INFORMATION BOOKLET

1

READ and REVIEW the information in this booklet.

2

COMPLETE the electronic School Immunization Consent Form that will be emailed to you in early September.



COMPLETE the electronic School Immunization Consent Form even if you **DO NOT** want to receive any of the vaccines.

If you do not have an active e-mail address, contact your school for a paper consent form.



WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK!

If you have any questions about the information in this booklet, or if there is anything you don't understand, contact your local Public Health office. Contact information for Public Health offices across the province can be found on the Public Health website:

www.nshealth.ca/public-health

If you would like information about Nova Scotia's Immunization Schedule, contact your local Public Health office. You can also visit the Department of Health and Wellness Immunization page:

novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/immunization.asp

If you'd like more information about immunization, visit these websites:

Immunize Canada
Public Health Agency of Canada

immunize.ca
phac-aspc.gc.ca

PRIVACY STATEMENT

Nova Scotia Health is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal health information, in accordance with the *Personal Health Information Act*.

Access to your personal health information is available to those who need to know in order to provide care, including physicians, nurses, technicians, therapists, and other health professionals. They are responsible for following Nova Scotia's *Personal Health Information Act*.

In collecting, using, or disclosing your personal health information, we take measures to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the information is protected in accordance with the *Personal Health Information Act*. This Privacy Statement provides a brief description of Nova Scotia Health's practices for the collection, use, and disclosure of personal health information.

School Immunization Program

INFORMATION BOOKLET

Every school year, Public Health offers students four free vaccines to prevent some serious diseases.

These vaccines are

- Hepatitis B
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV 9)
- Meningococcal Quadrivalent
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Acellular Pertussis (Tdap)

These vaccines are being offered because the diseases they prevent can be serious.

The Nova Scotia Immunization Schedule recommends that students receive these vaccines as part of their School Immunization Program.

In this booklet, you'll find information on these four vaccines and the diseases they prevent.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can a mature minor consent to or refuse a vaccine?

There is no age of consent in Nova Scotia. Individuals under the age of 19 who can understand the benefits of and possible reactions to the vaccine, and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations on their own. Every student is provided this information regarding these vaccines and is evaluated before immunization. This means that if they understand these risks and benefits, then they may decide for themselves whether to receive a vaccine or not.

2. When will these vaccines be given?

These vaccines will be given at two immunization clinics being held at school in the fall and spring.

The exact dates when these clinics will be held will be different for each school.

3. What if the student is sick or not in school on the day of the immunization clinic?

These vaccines will be offered at the next school clinic. Arrangements can also be made to get these vaccines at another time by calling your local Public Health office.

4. Can a primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or pharmacy give these vaccines?

Not all of these vaccines are available from a doctor or other health care provider free of charge.

The School Immunization Program offers all the vaccines in one place for free.

5. What if the student is afraid of needles?

The nurses at school clinics can help individuals who are worried or afraid. Please contact the Public Health office if the student has a medical condition, is very frightened about getting needles, or has ever fainted or been lightheaded while getting needles. The contact information is in the back of this booklet.

We will work out a plan to support the student. The next page includes tips for helping the student get ready to receive vaccines. Please do not give or take any medications to relieve anxiety about getting vaccines unless they are medically prescribed.

6. What if the student has already received some of these vaccines?

The student may have already received some of these vaccines if they have lived in another province or have travelled to another country. On the School Immunization Consent Form, fill in the dates when the vaccines were received. The nurse will only give the vaccines if they need them.

7. Do I get a record of the vaccines given?

Yes, there will be an electronic record available on VaxRecordNS. For more information please visit www.nshealth.ca/vaxrecordns.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations.

8. How does Public Health determine the vaccines used and the schedules followed?

The immunization schedule followed in Nova Scotia is based on guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). NACI is a Canadian team of infectious disease, immunology, and medical experts. NACI is responsible for examining, reviewing, and using evidence-based research to develop recommendations on the use of vaccines.

Helping to Get Ready for Immunizations

People are often worried about getting immunized or getting needles of any kind. Below are some tips to help make this easier.

➤ **Make sure the student knows what to expect.**

Students should know when the clinic will be, and should have a good breakfast on the day they are scheduled to receive vaccines. It is helpful to wear short sleeves, but the student can wear whatever is most comfortable to them.

➤ **Practice ways to take the student’s mind off the immunizations.**

Distraction—thinking about something else—is a good way to cope with something that might hurt. It may help to come up with a list of good distractions while the student is waiting to be immunized, getting an immunization, and afterwards. For example, the student could

- think of a favourite memory
- talk with a friend
- listen to music
- read a book

➤ **Never tell the student, “It won’t hurt.”**

Be honest and explain what they can really expect.

➤ **Help the student to stay calm.**

- Don’t joke or tease. For example, don’t say that they will get the “extra big” needle.
- Don’t apologize that the student “has to go through this.”

Information adapted from “Clinical Practice Guideline for Pain Management during Childhood Immunizations” developed by Help Eliminate Pain in Kids. If the student is especially anxious and needs more information to help with their anxiety, contact your local Public Health office. You’ll find contact information in the back of this booklet.

For more information on supporting students with a fear of needles, please view:

“Managing Needle Anxiety: Strategies for Supporting Your Child Through Injections and Bloodwork”

developed by IWK Health psychologists to provide support and strategies. Posted on the external IWK website:

https://youtu.be/VW_xPM2QhgE

INFORMATION ABOUT THE

Four Free Vaccines Offered in School

1. Hepatitis B Vaccine

What is Hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. It is caused by contact with the blood or body fluids of someone who is infected. Hepatitis B can cause permanent liver damage and can be life threatening. It is the number one cause of liver cancer.

Hepatitis B can be prevented by immunization.

What is Hepatitis B Vaccine?

Hepatitis B vaccine is given as a series of two doses over a period of six months, one in the fall and one in the spring. Both immunizations are needed to get full protection.

Does this vaccine have side effects?

Hepatitis B vaccine has few side effects. The most common side effects are redness, swelling, or pain in the area where the needle goes in. A slight fever may also occur.

CAUTION

Hepatitis B vaccine should NOT be given if the student

- has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of Hepatitis B vaccine or any of its components
- has already received Hepatitis B vaccine (if born outside of Nova Scotia, check the student's immunization records to see if the Hepatitis B immunization was already received)
- has already received Twinrix vaccine (if the student has received Twinrix for travel in the past, please record the dates in Section 2 of the consent form; the nurse will check to see if more Hepatitis B vaccine is needed)

Check with a health care provider BEFORE the student receives this vaccine if they

- have an illness or are taking medications that could affect their immune system
- have thrombocytopenia or other bleeding disorders

Individuals who are pregnant should check with a doctor before receiving this vaccine.



2. Human Papillomavirus (HPV 9) Vaccine

What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of very common viruses that can be spread to anyone through sexual contact. Most of these viruses are harmless. Others cause genital warts, and some are more serious and cause cancer, including cancer of the cervix, penis, anus, throat, and neck.

There is no cure for HPV infections, but immunization is highly effective at preventing infection by some of the types of HPV that cause cancers and genital warts.

What is HPV vaccine?

HPV 9 vaccine prevents infection by the most common types of HPV. You cannot get HPV from this vaccine.

What is the HPV vaccine schedule? Has it changed?

Starting in fall 2025, the HPV vaccine schedule for Grade 7 students will change from a 2-dose program to a 1-dose program.

This is based on recent guidance from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). Nova Scotia depends on this advisory committee to help make decisions on best practice when updating immunization policies. NACI now strongly recommends only a single dose of HPV vaccine for this age group because it provides effective and long-lasting protection, similar to the protection provided by 2 doses.

Why is this vaccine being offered now?

The Nova Scotia Immunization Schedule recommends that this vaccine be given to students as part of their School Immunization Program. Anyone can get HPV, and it increases a person's risk of getting HPV-related cancers. This helps to make sure that students are protected before they might be exposed to HPV.

Does this vaccine have side effects?

HPV 9 vaccine has few side effects. The most common side effects are redness, swelling, or pain in the area where the needle goes in. A slight fever may also occur.

CAUTION

HPV 9 vaccine should NOT be given if the student has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of HPV vaccine or any of its components.

Check with a health care provider BEFORE the student receives this vaccine if they

- have an illness or are taking medications that could affect their immune system
- have thrombocytopenia or other bleeding disorders

Individuals who are pregnant should check with a doctor before receiving this vaccine.

CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION PROGRAM

Nova Scotia Cancer Care's Cervical Cancer Prevention Program will be notified when an individual with a cervix has received HPV vaccine. Individuals who have been vaccinated may need a specific test when they are screened for cervical cancer. Even if this individual has received HPV vaccine, they will still need to have regular Pap tests to detect early signs of cervical cancer.

3. Meningococcal Quadrivalent Vaccine

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria called meningococcus. Groups A, C, Y, and W 135 are four of the strains of this bacteria that can cause meningococcal disease. Many people carry these bacteria at the back of their nose and throat without being sick. But sometimes the bacteria break through the body's defenses and cause serious illnesses including

- **meningitis**, an infection of the lining of the brain
- **meningococemia**, a widespread infection involving the blood and multiple organs

These diseases can be life threatening. Children could lose their hearing, experience kidney damage, or need to have an arm or a leg amputated.

Meningococcal disease caused by these four strains can be prevented by immunization.

What is Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine?

Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine provides protection against illness caused by these four strains of meningococcus. It does not protect against other strains of meningococcus. The vaccine is given in a single dose.

Does this vaccine have side effects?

Many people have no side effects at all. They may experience redness, swelling, or pain in the area where the needle goes in. Other side effects are headaches and tiredness.

CAUTION



Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine should NOT be given if the student has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine or any of its components.

Check with a health care provider BEFORE they receive this vaccine if they

- have an illness or are taking medications that could affect their immune system
- have thrombocytopenia or other bleeding disorders

Individuals who are pregnant should check with a doctor before receiving this vaccine.

4. Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Acellular Pertussis (Tdap) Vaccine

What are tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis?

Tetanus (Lockjaw)

Tetanus is caused when tetanus bacteria infect cuts or wounds. Tetanus bacteria are often found in dirt. These bacteria make a poison that causes muscles in the body to go into spasms.

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is an infection of the nose and throat. It is very serious. It can affect breathing, infect the skin, and cause heart failure or paralysis. Even with treatment, about 1 in 10 patients with respiratory diphtheria die. Without treatment, up to half of patients can die from the disease.

Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

Pertussis is a bacterial infection that causes severe coughing spells that can affect breathing. It can cause pneumonia, convulsions, and even death. Pertussis usually lasts for 6 to 12 weeks.

Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis can be life-threatening illnesses, and all are preventable by immunization.

What is the vaccine for tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis?

Tdap is one vaccine which prevents tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis.

Why is this vaccine being offered now?

An individual receives four to five doses of tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccines as an infant and preschooler. This vaccine is a booster to those earlier vaccinations.

Does this vaccine have side effects?

Most people have no side effects at all. The most common side effects of this vaccine are redness, swelling, or pain in the area where the needle goes in. Other, less common, side effects are mild headache, fever, chills, diarrhea, nausea, body aches, decreased energy, and sore or swollen joints.

TETANUS, DIPHTHERIA, AND ACELLULAR PERTUSSIS VACCINE — CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

CAUTION

Tdap vaccine should NOT be given if the student has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of Tdap-containing vaccine or any of its components.



If the student has had a tetanus vaccine—for example, after a cut, dog bite, or stitches— please note the date on the consent form.

Check with a health care provider BEFORE the student receives this vaccine if they

- have an illness or are taking medications that could affect their immune system
- have thrombocytopenia or other bleeding disorders

Individuals who are pregnant should check with a doctor before receiving this vaccine.

What can I do in the event of a reaction or a fever?

After any vaccine is given, students will be observed for at least 15 minutes. This is because there is a slight chance that they could have a serious allergic reaction. A serious reaction would happen soon after receiving the vaccine.

By observing the students, the nurse will be able to take care of them.

If the student has a fever, they may need treatment for the fever at home after the vaccination. Make sure you have acetaminophen or ibuprofen at home just in case.

A fever is not necessarily bad, but it may make them uncomfortable. If the student has a fever,

- take their temperature
- give them acetaminophen or ibuprofen if their temperature is over 38.5 °C (101.3 °F), and follow the instructions on the container
- encourage them to drink EXTRA fluids, such as water and juice

CAUTION



Call your health care provider or 811 if

- the fever lasts longer than 24 hours
- the fever is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher
- the fever doesn't come down after you've given acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- they are unwell and have other symptoms



How to contact your local Public Health office

For more information on vaccines provided through the School Immunization Program, or to find contact details for your local Public Health Office, please visit the Public Health website: www.nshealth.ca/public-health