



School Immunization Program

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

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READ the information in this booklet.

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COMPLETE, SIGN, DATE, and RETURN the School Immunization Consent Form that came with this booklet.



SIGN and RETURN the School Immunization Consent Form even if you **DO NOT** want your child to receive any of the vaccines.

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. You'll find contact information in the back of this booklet. You can also visit 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 FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

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. When will my child get these vaccines?

Your child will get these vaccines at two immunization clinics being held at your child's school in the fall and spring.

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

2. What if my child is sick or not in school on the day of the immunization clinic?

Don't worry. The nurse can make arrangements for your child to get these vaccines at another time. Your child will be followed until all vaccines have been completed.

3. Can my child get these vaccines from our health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner)?

Not all of these vaccines are available from a doctor or other health care provider free of charge. The School Immunization Program offers your child all the vaccines in one place for free.

4. What if my child is afraid of needles?

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

We will work out a plan to support your child. On the next page you'll find some tips for helping your child get ready to receive vaccines. Please do not give your child any medications to relieve anxiety about getting vaccines unless they are medically prescribed.

5. What if my child has already received some of these vaccines?

Your child 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 your child received the vaccines. The nurse will only give the vaccines to your child if they need them.

6. Do I get a record of the vaccines my child receives?

Yes. After your child has received ALL the vaccines you consented to, they will be provided with a record of their immunizations. You should keep this with their other health records.

It is important to keep a record of all your child's immunizations.

Helping Your Child Get Ready For Immunizations

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

➤ **Make sure they know what will happen.**

Tell them when the clinic will be. Remind your child to eat a good breakfast on the day they are scheduled to receive vaccines. It is helpful if your child wears short sleeves. Your child can also wear whatever is most comfortable to them; they will still receive their vaccines.

➤ **Help them work out ways to take their mind off the actual immunizations.**

Distraction—thinking about something else—is a good way to cope with something that might hurt. Help your child to come up with a list of things they can do to distract themselves while waiting for the needle, while getting their immunization, and afterwards. For example, they could

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

➤ **Never say, “It won’t hurt.”**

Be honest. Tell them what they can really expect. You can tell them something like, “You might feel a small pinch and some pressure.”

➤ **Help them stay calm.**

- Be calm and matter of fact yourself. This is no big deal.
- Don’t joke or tease. For example, don’t say that they will get the “extra big” needle.
- Don’t apologize that they “have to go through this.”

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

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 needles over a period of six months, one in the fall and one in the spring. Your child needs both needles 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. Your child may also have a slight fever.

CAUTION

Your child should NOT receive Hepatitis B vaccine if they

- have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of Hepatitis B vaccine
- have already received Hepatitis B vaccine (if your child was born outside of Nova Scotia, check their immunization records to see if they have already received Hepatitis B immunization)
- have already received Twinrix vaccine (if your child 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 your child needs any more Hepatitis B vaccine)

Check with a health care provider BEFORE your child receives this vaccine if they

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

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



2. Human Papillomavirus (HPV 9) Vaccine

What is HPV?

There are many different types of HPV. Some are harmless. There is no cure for HPV, but immunization can prevent infection by the most common types that infect the genital area and may lead to genital warts and several types of cancer, including cervical, penile, anal, throat, and neck cancer.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a very common sexually transmitted infection that affects males and females. Almost everyone gets HPV at some time in their life. Often, the body gets rid of HPV on its own and the infected person never knows about it.

What is HPV vaccine?

HPV 9 vaccine is given as a series of two needles over a period of six months, one in the fall and one in the spring. Your child needs both needles to get full protection. HPV 9 vaccine prevents infection by the most common types of HPV. Your child cannot get HPV from this vaccine.

Why is this vaccine being offered to my child now?

The Nova Scotia Immunization Schedule recommends that this vaccine be given to students as part of their School Immunization Program. This helps to make sure that children 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. Your child may also have a slight fever.

CAUTION

Your child should NOT receive HPV 9 vaccine if they have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of HPV vaccine.

Check with a health care provider BEFORE your child receives this vaccine if they

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

Females 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 a female has received HPV vaccine. This is because whether or not a female has been vaccinated may affect the kind of test that will be most effective in the future when she is screened for cervical cancer. Even if a female has received HPV vaccine, she 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 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 (septicemia) 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 Groups A, C, Y, and W 135 disease can be prevented by immunization.

What is Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine?

Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine provides protection against illness caused by the groups A, C, Y, and W 135 strains of meningococcus. It does not protect against other strains of meningococcus. The vaccine is given in a single needle.

Does this vaccine have side effects?

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

CAUTION



Your child should NOT receive Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine if they have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine.

Check with a health care provider BEFORE your child receives this vaccine if they

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

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

4. Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Acellular Pertussis 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.

Tetanus can be life threatening. Tetanus can be prevented by immunization.

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. Diphtheria kills about 1 of every 10 people who get it.

Diphtheria can be prevented by immunization.

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.

Pertussis can be prevented by immunization.

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

Tdap is three vaccines in one. It prevents tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Tdap is given in a single needle.

Why is this vaccine being offered to my child now?

Your child received four to five doses of tetanus, diphtheria, and acellular pertussis vaccines as an infant and preschooler. This Tdap is a booster to those earlier vaccinations.

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

Does this vaccine have side effects?

Many children have no side effects at all. The most common side effects of Tdap 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.

CAUTION

Your child should NOT receive Tdap vaccine if they have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of Tdap.



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

Check with a health care provider BEFORE your child receives this vaccine if they

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

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

What can I do if my child has a reaction or a fever?

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

By observing your child, the nurse would be able to take care of them.

If your child has a fever, you might need to treat 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 your child uncomfortable. If you think your child has a fever,

- take their temperature
- give them acetaminophen or ibuprofen if their temperature is over 38.5 °C (101 °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 39.5°C (103°F) or higher
- the fever doesn't come down after you've given your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- your child seems sick and has other symptoms



How to contact your local Public Health office

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. You can also visit the Public Health website: www.nshealth.ca/public-health

Amherst

902-667-3319 or
1-800-767-3319

Antigonish

902-867-4500
ext. 4800

Baddeck

902-295-2178

Barrington Passage

902-637-2430

Berwick

902-538-3700

Bridgewater

902-543-0850

Canso

902-366-2925

Chester

902-275-3581

Cheticamp

902-224-2410

Digby

902-245-2557

Elmsdale

902-883-3500

Glace Bay

902-842-4050

Guysborough

902-533-3502

Halifax Regional Municipality & Eastern Shore

902-481-5800

Inverness

902-258-1920

Liverpool

902-354-5738

Lunenburg

902-634-4014

Meteghan Centre

902-645-2325

Middleton

902-825-3385

Neil's Harbour

902-336-2295

New Glasgow

902-752-5151

New Waterford

902-862-2204

North Sydney

902-794-2009

Port Hawkesbury

902-625-1693

Sheet Harbour

902-885-2470

Shelburne

902-875-2623

Sydney

902-563-2400

Truro

902-893-5820

Windsor & Wolfville

902-542-6310

Yarmouth

902-742-7141