

Preparing your child for their immunization

Before the immunization

Vaccine injections can be a source of distress for children and parents. With some preparation and kid-friendly explanation, parents can help to make vaccine visits easier and less stressful.

- Prepare your child before the visit. Be honest. Avoid telling your child “it won’t hurt”. Explain that shots may pinch or pressure may be felt, but it will only last a few seconds. Tell your child that vaccines are important to keep them healthy.
- Always keep calm and use a normal speaking voice. Don’t criticize. This will help the child stay calm. Deep breathing exercise may be helpful.
- Your child needs to have their arms exposed for administration of the immunization. Your child should remove their outer clothing such as jackets or sweaters before proceeding to the exam room with the child.
- Ideally, your child should be wearing a tank top or sleeveless shirt to expose their arms.
- Bring your child’s favourite toy to the appointment.

Administering the vaccine

It is important to administer the vaccine swiftly to the child, as well as keeping the child from moving their arms(s). Movement of the arm during an injection can result in injury to the child or healthcare professional administering the vaccine. Part of or the entire vaccine dose could be lost.

Procedure for the injection

Options during the injection are to have the child sit upright or parents can provide a gentle hold on their child while on their lap. Ensuring the child’s comfort will help to ensure the child stays calm and still.

For more information on Pain and Fear management during immunization: Please visit www.immunize.ca. Select parents, and then select “Pain Management during immunization”.

After the vaccination

Most children are fine after vaccination and may have no reaction at all to the vaccine. Side effects, if any, are usually mild and last only a few days after getting the shot. The most common side effects include:

- Having a sore, swollen, or red spot where the needle went in;
- Having a low fever; or decreased energy, generalized body ache, sore joints;
- Live vaccines such as the Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella (MMRV) vaccines may produce a mild form of symptoms of the natural disease up to 21 days after the vaccine was given. For example: A chickenpox like rash or a measles-like red rash.

You will be asked to wait in either the exam room or in your vehicle for 20 minutes after your child's vaccination to monitor your child for signs of a reaction. As with any medicine, there is a very slight chance of a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).



Signs of a serious allergic reaction, though very rare, include:

- Breathing problems (wheezing/ hoarseness)
- Swelling of the face; and/or mouth
- Hives
- Convulsions or seizures

Please report any side effects or severe vaccine reaction to your health care provider or local public health unit.

Immunization Record

After your child receives any immunization, make sure the health care provider updates the personal immunization record. This will be your record to keep so that you know what immunizations you have received.

Parents and guardians are responsible for reporting vaccines administered to the local Public Health Unit. As part of our service, we will do this for you.

Tetanus

Tetanus or lockjaw is a serious disease that can happen if dirt with the tetanus germ gets into a cut in the skin. It can cause cramping of the muscles and dangerous convulsions.

Diphtheria

This is a serious disease of the nose, throat and skin. It causes sore throat, fever and chills. Diphtheria can be complicated by breathing problems, heart failure and nerve damage.

Pertussis (Whooping cough)

Whooping cough is a contagious disease that causes prolonged cough in children, adolescents and adults. Whooping cough can be serious in infants. This cough can cause children to vomit or stop breathing for a short period of time. It can also cause serious complications such as pneumonia, as well as brain damage and seizure in babies.

Polio

Polio is a serious disease that people can get from drinking water or eating food with the polio virus in it. It can also be spread from person to person. Polio can cause nerve damage, paralyze someone for life and also cause death.

Measles

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection. It causes high fever, cough, rash, runny nose and red eyes. Measles can cause complications such as ear infections and pneumonia.

Mumps

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus and is characterized by fever, headache as well as swelling of the cheek, jaw and neck. It can cause complications such as hearing loss and inflammation of the brain.

Rubella

Rubella is a contagious disease caused by a virus. Rubella may cause fever, rash, headache, mild runny nose and red eyes (conjunctivitis). It can cause serious complications in pregnant women and their babies, and arthritis in adults.

Varicella

Chickenpox is a contagious disease that can cause fatigue, mild headache, fever up to 39°C, chills and muscle or joint aches a day or two before a red, itchy, blister-like rash begins. Complications from chicken pox can be serious and include bacterial skin infections, ear infections, and pneumonia.

For more information go to www.ontario.ca/vaccines