

# School Immunization Information Sheet

## Frequently asked questions

### When will my child get these vaccines?

Southwestern Public Health visits schools two (2) times during the school year. During the fall visit, all three (3) vaccines will be given and at the spring visit, the second dose of Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) will be offered. This allows us to complete the vaccine series within the recommended intervals. Please look on our website or check with the school for dates we are planning on visiting each school and for any changes to the schedule.

### What if my child misses immunization day at school?

You can book an appointment for your child at Public Health immunization clinics or your child will receive the immunization the next time we are at the school.

### What if my child has already been given some of these needles?

If your child has already been given these vaccines, write the dates they were given on the consent form. If you are not sure if your child has been given any of these needles, call Public Health at 1-800-922-0096. We will help you figure out if your child needs to be immunized now.

### Can I take my child to our usual health care provider to get these vaccines?

Most health care providers in Oxford, Elgin and St. Thomas do not carry these vaccines. It is easiest to get them through Public Health.

### What if my child is afraid of needles?

The nurses who give vaccines at schools will work with your child to make this experience as positive as possible. Most students do well with their immunizations in school, even if they are worried before. Students who are extremely anxious may do better with an appointment at Public Health instead of being immunized at school.

### Do I get a record of these immunizations?

Yes. After every vaccination, we will give your child a record of what was given that day. Keep these records with your child's other health records.

### Are these vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines are tested for many years before they are approved for use in Canada. Vaccines continue to be tested after they start being used.

## Helping your child get ready for immunizations

Lots of people get nervous before getting a needle. Here are some things you can do to help your child get ready for immunization day at school:



**Tell your child when the clinic will be.** It is usually best if children know when they are getting a needle. The day before the clinic is a good time to remind your child that (s)he is getting a needle.



**Talk about ways to deal with fear or anxiety.** Distraction can be helpful. Your child may want to listen to some music or play a game on his/her phone when the needle is given. Review some other helpful ways to deal with fear or anxiety: count to 10, look away from the needle, focus on breathing, think about something fun.



**Be honest about pain.** Tell your child that it will hurt a bit. There may be a stinging feeling or some pressure where the vaccine goes in. Remind your child that getting needles is quick- it will hurt a bit, but it won't last very long.



**Help keep your child calm.** Children know when you are worried or anxious. If you are calm about getting these needles, it will help your child be calm too. Don't joke about the needle (i.e., don't tell your child (s)he will need an "extra big" needle). Don't apologize that the needles are being given or that your child "has to go through this."



**Make sure your child is ready on clinic day.** Make sure your child eats that morning and wears a short-sleeved shirt.

## What about side effects?

Many children have no side effects after getting needles. The most common side effects of these immunizations are pain, redness, and swelling where the needle was put in. Other side effects might be a headache, feeling tired, fever, loss of appetite, and diarrhea.

**Allergic reactions like a blotchy raised rash (hives), wheezing, or swelling of the face and mouth are extremely rare. If you notice any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.**

### What should I do if my child has side effects?

The nurses who gave your child's immunizations will remain in the school for at least 15 minutes after the last needle is given. Most serious reactions happen soon after the needle is given. If your child is unwell after arriving home:

- Use a cold compress on the area where the needle was given to reduce swelling and discomfort.
- If your child has a fever or pain, give acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) according to the directions on the bottle.
- If your child has a fever, make sure your child drinks lots of fluids like water and juice.

If you have any concerns about your child's reaction, contact your health care provider and/or a Public Health Nurse on the Immunization Team.

## MENINGOCOCCAL A, C, Y, W-135 VACCINE

### What are the problems with Meningococcal Disease?

Many people carry meningococcal bacteria without knowing it. Usually the bacteria don't make them sick, but they can infect other people.

People get sick when meningococcal bacteria get into the blood and other body fluids. These bacteria can cause:

- infection of the fluid around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis)
- infection of the blood (bacteremia)
- widespread infection of the blood and organs (septicemia)

People who develop these problems can end up with permanent brain damage and deafness. They may have to have parts of their body amputated (cut off). Sometimes, they die in just a few hours because they can't get treatment fast enough.

Meningococcal disease is spread through close contact and sharing saliva (i.e., kissing, coughing, sharing drinks). Young children and teens get this disease the most because they like to share.

### Vaccine benefits

Most babies living in Ontario get one dose of meningococcal vaccine. This protects them against one type of the bacteria.

The grade 7 vaccine is different. It protects against four of the main types of the bacteria. It protects 80% to 85% of vaccinated teens from getting infected. At this point, we don't think a booster dose will be needed but it is still too early to tell for sure.

### What if I decide not to vaccinate?

The law (Immunization of School Pupils Act) says students have to have this shot. Parents who choose not to vaccinate have to complete an exemption form and education session. This form must be notarized and brought to Public Health.

There are some children who cannot get a vaccine for medical reasons. A doctor needs to fill out a medical exemption for them. This form must be brought to Public Health.

Your child may be at risk of getting meningococcal disease or giving it to someone else if you decide not to vaccinate. Students who are not vaccinated or who do not have an exemption filed with Public Health can be suspended from school.

Vaccine Contains	Also found in
Killed pieces of meningococcal bacteria	Meningococcal bacteria
Diphtheria or tetanus toxoid	Other childhood vaccines
Sodium chloride	Human body, table salt
Sodium phosphate	Laxatives
Sucrose	Sugar
Trometamol	Cosmetics, perfumes

## HEPATITIS B VACCINE

### What are the problems with Hep B?

Hep B is short for Hepatitis B. The Hep B virus is spread through blood and body fluids. Some people who have Hep B don't feel sick at all.

People who do have signs of illness might have abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes (jaundice).

Hep B can cause inflammation, damage, or cancer of the liver. Each year in Ontario, Hep B causes about:

- 346 deaths
- 308 cancers
- 90 cases of inflamed or damaged liver

### Vaccine benefits

The Hep B vaccine protects 99% of children against Hep B. Two shots are needed in this age group to provide the best protection. People who get protected from the vaccine are considered protected for life.

### What if I decide not to vaccinate?

The Hep B vaccine is not required by law (Immunization of School Pupils Act). However, your child may be at risk of getting Hep B if you decide not to vaccinate. Many college/university programs require students to have proof they are protected against Hepatitis B.

The vaccine is free for students starting in grade 7. Students who don't get the vaccine that year can get it for free until the end of grade 8. People who wait to get the vaccine may have to pay for it. People who wait until they are older to get the vaccine may need more doses for it to be effective.

### What's in the vaccine?

Vaccine Contains	Also found in
Killed pieces of Hep B virus	Hep B
Aluminum	Vegetables, cereal, deodorant
Sodium chloride*	Human body, table salt
Yeast*	Human body, bread, bagels
Sodium borate*	Water, soil
Formaldehyde*	Human body, fruits, fish

\* Found only in Recombivax HB®

## HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS (HPV) VACCINE

### What are the problems with HPV?

HPV is short for Human Papillomavirus. The virus is spread by sexual skin to skin contact.

There are many different types of the HPV virus; some are high risk and some are not. High risk types cause cancers (cervical, anal, genital, mouth and throat). They are the cause of most cervical cancers. Lower risk types cause most genital warts.

Sometimes people who have HPV have no symptoms and they spread it to people without knowing it. Each year in Ontario, HPV results in about:

- 254 deaths
- 1,090 cancers
- 14,666 cases of genital warts

### Vaccine benefits

The HPV vaccine protects against nine (9) types of the HPV virus that cause either cancer or genital warts. The vaccine provides close to full protection against these 9 types of HPV. Two shots are needed in this age group to provide the best protection. Studies are being done to find out if a booster will be needed in the future.

### What if I decide not to vaccinate?

The HPV vaccine is not required by law (Immunization of School Pupils Act). However, your child may be at risk of getting HPV if you decide not to vaccinate.

The vaccine is free for students starting in grade 7. If students are offered the vaccine in grade 7 but don't get it that year, they can still get it for free until they graduate high school. People who wait until they are older to get the vaccine usually need more doses for it to be effective.

### What's in the vaccine?

Vaccine Contains	Also found in
Killed pieces of HPV proteins	HPV
Yeast	Human body, bread, bagels
Sodium chloride	Human body, table salt
Aluminum	Vegetables, cereal, deodorant
L-histidine	Human body, beans, fish, milk
Polysorbate 80	Ice cream, cottage cheese
Sodium borate	Water, soil

## FOR MORE INFORMATION



Visit our website:  
[www.publichealth.ca](http://www.publichealth.ca)



Ask your family  
health care provider



Talk to a Public  
Health Nurse  
1-800-922-0096