

Don't Wait, Vaccinate!

A Guide to Immunization
for First Nations Parents
and Caregivers



Health
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Protecting Children

Children have a special place within First Nations communities. They make families stronger and communities whole. Elders have taught that each child carries a special gift that they will use when they grow to be the caregivers, leaders, and visionaries of their communities.

For this reason, parents and caregivers have the responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. Part of this responsibility is to protect children from vaccine preventable diseases and illnesses by getting them immunized.

It is important to have all the facts when making decisions about your child's immunizations. This booklet can help parents and caregivers with these decisions by giving factual information, including:

- How vaccines work to protect your children 2**
- Germs, the immunization experience and possible side effects 4**
- When and where to immunize your child, and keeping immunization records 8**
- Your community and immunization 18**



DID YOU KNOW?

The terms vaccination and immunization mean the same thing.



Vaccines Protect Children

Elders share knowledge of medicines that have been used for generations. These 'good medicines' have been used by First Nations communities to prevent sickness and heal those who are ill. Many of these medicines are still used today.

Vaccines are also good medicine for your child. They help protect children from a number of diseases, some of which can be very serious and cause death.

What is a vaccine?

A vaccine is the substance given to immunize your child. This substance contains killed or weakened germs of a specific disease in order to protect your child from getting the real disease.

Vaccines help your child's immune system produce two important tools: antibodies that fight off the specific disease and immune memory that helps children in case they are exposed to the disease again in the future.



Vaccines are safe

Vaccines are effective and safe. Canada has a strict approval and monitoring process for vaccines. Vaccines are monitored from the time they are made to the time they are given and afterward. Part of this system includes tracking any side effects.

The dangers of vaccine preventable diseases are much greater than the risks of a serious reaction to a vaccine. It is important for children to receive their vaccines on time. Most children who receive all of their vaccines on time are fully protected from the vaccine preventable diseases they were immunized against. Some children get partial protection from immunizations. This means that they may still have mild symptoms if exposed to one of these diseases, but generally won't have the potentially serious complications.

Immunizations are still needed today

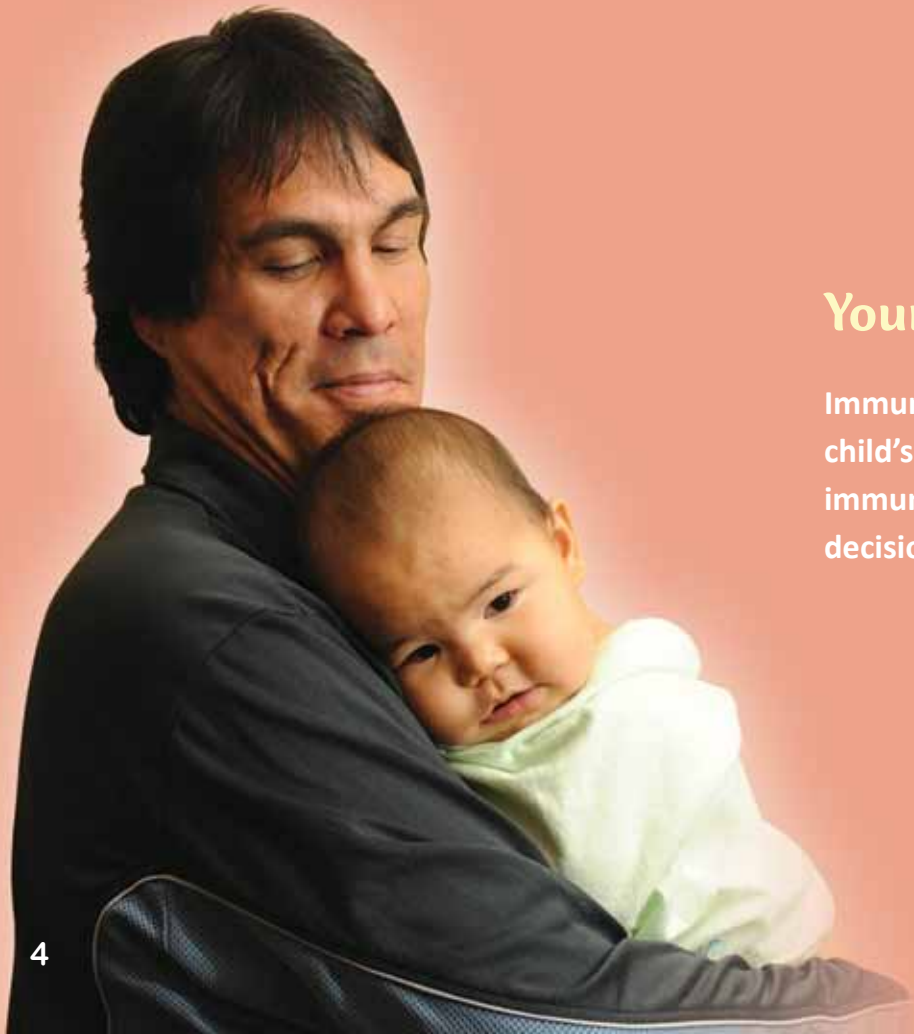
Over the last 50 years, immunization has saved the lives of more babies and children than any other medical intervention. Today, we are lucky. Because most children are immunized, many diseases, such as polio, have almost disappeared – but not completely.

If children are not immunized, these diseases will become more common again. When you immunize your child, you help to keep these diseases under control – for good.



DID YOU KNOW?

Immunization is the best way to protect your child from vaccine preventable diseases. Keep your children strong!



Your Child and Immunization

Immunization is an important part of your child's health. Learning the facts about immunization can help you make good decisions to protect your child.



Exposure to germs

Children are by nature curious and friendly. They are endlessly exploring and experiencing new things. During this period of curiosity, children are exposed to many germs every day through activities such as playing at a daycare centre or with other children in the community, or attending a pow wow or community feast.

Germs can spread very easily. **Coughing, sneezing** or **simply talking** are all ways germs can be transmitted. Germs also spread when a child **touches** something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth. Germs can live for hours or days on surfaces like doorknobs, toys, desks and tables. Fortunately, most of these germs are harmless because your child's immune system can fight against them.

Some diseases are serious. It's important for your child to get immunized on time so that vaccines can help their immune system fight off disease. Getting vaccines at a young age will protect your child now and throughout their life.



It's immunization time! What should I expect?

Understanding what will happen when your child is immunized can help make the experience easier for both of you. Your nurse or health care provider will ask a few questions about your child's health. Be sure to tell them if your child has any illnesses or allergies.

How can I help my child?

Our children often react to our own emotions. If you are anxious or nervous, your child may feel this. Touching, talking or cuddling with your child will help make the vaccination a more comfortable experience.

Is there any chance of an allergic reaction to the vaccines?

Like any medicine, there may be a slight chance of an allergic reaction. For this reason, you will be asked to wait 15 minutes after your child's immunization before leaving your health care provider's office or public health office (CLSC in Quebec). You should contact your nurse or health care provider right away if your child is having problems breathing (wheezing noise) or if your child's skin gets red and blotchy (hives). They will know what to do to help your child.



What kind of reactions can I expect?

Common Reactions

Most children are fine after immunization. However, your child may:

- Be cranky, fussy, or sleepy (more than usual)
- Have a low fever
- Develop a sore red spot or a small amount of swelling around the area of the injection site

These symptoms are common and do not last very long, a couple of days at the most. Before you leave, ask your nurse or health care provider what you can do for your child to ease any discomfort.

When to get help

If your baby shows signs of any of the following, contact your nurse, doctor or health care provider **right away**:

- Fever over 40°C or 104°F
- Seizure or convulsions — this is often related to a very high fever
- Crying or fussy for more than 24 hours
- Swelling and redness at the injection site that is getting worse
- Unusually sleepy or unresponsive
- ***If you sense that something isn't right after an immunization***



Parents, Caregivers and Immunization

As a parent or caregiver, your child's health is in your hands. It is important for you to know when and where to get your child's immunizations.

When should I immunize my child?

Timing is very important when it comes to immunization. Vaccines work best when given on time; beginning when your child is still very young, as your child is most vulnerable to disease during the first two years of life.

An immunization schedule will tell you which immunization to get for your child and at what age. Following the schedule will make sure that your child gets the most benefit from the vaccines.



DID YOU KNOW?

Most children can still be immunized even if they have a cold or mild fever.

Immunization schedules are different depending on which province or territory you live in. Here's an example of a common schedule for when a child may be immunized:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 12 to 15 months
- 18 months; and
- Between the ages of 4 to 6 years

Your nurse or health care provider should provide you with a schedule for your child.

If you plan to move out of your province or territory in the early years of your child's life, you will want to make sure that your child completes the series of any vaccines they may have started and continues to receive all other scheduled vaccinations. Once settled in your new location, contact your local health care provider or public health office (CLSC in Quebec) for an immunization schedule and have your child vaccinated according to this schedule.

Life with young children can be very busy. Sometimes things happen which may cause your child to miss one or more of their scheduled vaccinations. Getting back on track is important. You should make an appointment with a nurse or health care provider as soon as possible to get your child's vaccinations up to date.











DID YOU KNOW?




Children are best protected when they receive *all doses* of their vaccines *on time*.





What immunizations are recommended for my child?

Disease	Symptoms of disease	Possible complications of disease
Diphtheria		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe sore throat • High fever • Respiratory and heart problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paralysis • Death in 5-10% of cases
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent coughing fits that may persist for months • Difficulty eating, drinking, and breathing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pneumonia • Convulsions • Brain damage (1 case per 11,000) • Death (0.4% among infants)
Tetanus		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jaw spasms • Vocal chord spasms • Full-body muscle spasms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Death in 10% of cases
Polio		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Nausea and vomiting • General discomfort • Paralysis of arms and legs (1% of cases) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathing problems • Permanent paralysis (nearly 50% of hospitalized cases) • Death (5% of hospitalized cases)

Disease	Symptoms of disease	Possible complications of disease
Haemophilus Influenzae type B (Hib)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epiglottitis (severe swelling of the throat) • Pneumonia • Meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deafness • Mental retardation • Death (5% of meningitis cases)
Measles		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rash • Cough • Fever • Conjunctivitis (pink eye) • General feeling of illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear infection (5-9% of cases) • Pneumonia (1-5% of cases) • Convulsions • Permanent brain damage (1 case per 1,000) • Death (1 case per 3,000)
Mumps		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Headache • Swollen glands near jawbone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meningitis (10-30% of cases) • Deafness • Testicular infection • Ovarian infection
German Measles (Rubella)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rash • Swollen glands • Arthritis (especially in women) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscarriage in pregnant women • Malformations in infants in cases where mother was infected during pregnancy

Disease	Symptoms of disease	Possible complications of disease
<p data-bbox="110 179 375 208">Chickenpox (Varicella)</p> 	<ul data-bbox="402 227 867 319" style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Many small blisters that develop scabs • Itching 	<ul data-bbox="989 227 1479 525" style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear infection • Pneumonia • Skin infection (e.g. impetigo), sometimes severe (e.g. flesh-eating disease) • Encephalitis (brain infection) • Malformations in infants in cases where mother was infected during pregnancy • Shingles (15-30% over lifetime) • Death
<p data-bbox="110 547 293 576">Meningococcal</p> 	<ul data-bbox="402 595 878 784" style="list-style-type: none"> • High fever • Severe headache • Nausea and vomiting • General feeling of illness • Red marks or tiny pin-size hemorrhages or bruises on the skin 	<ul data-bbox="989 595 1500 751" style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent brain damage • Amputation of hands or feet (10-15% of those infected with serogroup C) • Death (10-15% of individuals infected with serogroup C)
<p data-bbox="110 805 289 835">Pneumococcal</p> 	<ul data-bbox="402 849 954 1013" style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear infection • Sinusitis • Pneumonia • Meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain) • Bacteremia (blood infection) 	<ul data-bbox="989 849 1305 942" style="list-style-type: none"> • Deafness • Permanent brain damage • Death

Disease	Symptoms of disease	Possible complications of disease
Hepatitis B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Abdominal pain • Jaundice (yellow colouring of the skin and the whites of the eyes) • Vomiting • Diarrhea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe liver disease • Long-term liver infection (10% of adults and up to 90% of infants) • Cirrhosis of the liver • Liver cancer • Death (1% of cases)
Seasonal Flu (Influenza) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Cough • Fatigue • Headache • Muscle and joint pain • General feeling of illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear infection • Sinusitis • Bronchitis • Pneumonia • Death

Content adapted from the Canadian Paediatric Society's "Your Child's Best Shot - A parent's guide to vaccination."

Images created by Health Canada's Alberta Region were developed in consultation with Alberta First Nations communities.



Where do I take my child for immunization?

Where you take your child will vary depending on where you live – on reserve or in an urban, rural or remote community.

There are a number of different ways to find out where your child can get vaccinated. You can talk to a nurse or health care provider in your community, or contact an urban health centre, family clinic, or another health care facility. You can also do a quick search in the phone book or on the internet for a public health office (CLSC in Quebec).



Why should I keep track of immunization?

Your child's health and well-being are reasons why you should keep track of your child's immunizations. By keeping track of your child's immunization, you can help ensure that your nurse or health care provider has the proper information and that your child receives the right vaccinations on time.

At your first visit, ask your nurse or health care provider for an immunization record (or card). Remember to bring your child's immunization record to each appointment, so that it can be updated each time your child has a vaccination.

An immunization record may be required when your child:

- Starts school
- Is transferred to a school in another area
- Goes to camp
- Receives health care outside the community
- Travels outside the country
- Moves to another community
- Has a new nurse or health care provider



Is immunization required for my child?

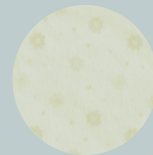
Individual provinces and territories have different regulations regarding immunization. Some provinces and territories require that your child's immunization be up to date before starting daycare or school. You can talk to your nurse or health care provider for more information.





Your Community and Immunization

Immunizing your child promotes good health throughout the community. Sharing this information with your family and friends can encourage other parents to immunize their children as well.



Healthier and stronger communities

Immunizations not only help protect your child from vaccine preventable diseases, they can also help stop the spread of these diseases in your community. This means you are also protecting the members of your community from disease.

The more community members receive immunizations, the more we are able to keep these diseases from coming back and keep communities healthy and strong.



DID YOU KNOW?

The more people who are immunized in your community, the more protection your community has against vaccine preventable diseases.



Is there more information out there?

There are many people talking about the benefits of immunization. If you have questions, there are a number of places you can turn to for answers.

Talk to your nurse, doctor, or other health care provider in your community or local health centre. You can also look to your provincial or territorial health department for more information about immunization schedules and services.



Here are some Web sites to find information on immunization:

Health Canada

www.healthcanada.gc.ca/vaccinate

Get Immunized/Information: Aboriginal Peoples Immunization Info

www.getimmunized.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.publichealth.gc.ca/immunization

Canadian Paediatric Society

www.caringforkids.cps.ca/immunization

Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion

www.immunize.ca

Remember, if you have more questions about immunization and your child, talk to your health care provider.

Quick checklist for your child's immunizations



Make an appointment

The first immunization may start at the age of 2 months, but your health care provider will give you a schedule for your child.

Bring your child's immunization record

You will need your baby's immunization record, which you'll get at the first appointment.

Make the next appointment

Set a date for your baby's next immunization before you leave your health care provider's office or public health office (CLSC in Quebec).

Mark the next date on your calendar

Do this as soon as you get home so you won't forget.
Use the stickers in this booklet to mark the date.

Keep your child's immunization record for the next visit

Put it in a safe place so you can find it when you need it.



Remember, immunization is the safest way to protect your child's health.

To learn more visit your local health centre or go to
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/vaccinate

For other ways to keep your family healthy and safe
go to www.healthy Canadians.gc.ca

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Represented by the Minister of Health, 2010.
ISBN: H34-225/1-2010E
Catalogue No.: 978-1-100-17357-3
Publication No.: 100590

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français
sous le titre

N'attendez-pas, Vaccinez!
Guide de vaccination à l'intention
des parents et des gardiens des
Premières nations

