

Grade 6 School Immunization Program

Public Health - Factsheet for Parents & Guardians

Immunization is one of the most important accomplishments in public health. Immunizations help in eliminating and controlling the spread of infections and diseases. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause disease.

Every school year, public health nurses offer grade 6 students the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, hepatitis B vaccine, and the meningococcal ACYW vaccine.

Why should my child get these vaccines?

Vaccines help prepare the body to fight potential future exposure to the viruses or bacteria by getting the immune system ready. Vaccines work best when given before your child is exposed to the viruses/bacteria, so it is extremely important to get the vaccines before they are exposed.

When given as part of the recommended childhood immunization schedule, all these vaccines are very effective at preventing disease (as high as 95% effective).

These vaccines are free. None of these vaccines contain live virus/bacteria, so they cannot cause these infections.

All adolescents should be immunized against HPV, meningococcal disease, and hepatitis B. Immunization is the best way to protect your child against these diseases, which can be serious and sometimes fatal.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

HPV infection can cause genital warts and cancers in the head, neck, and genitals. There is no screening for most of these cancers and about 100 Manitobans are diagnosed with an HPV related cancer each year.

HPV is a virus that is spread through intimate contact. About 80% of people will have an HPV infection in their lifetime.

The HPV vaccine provides protection against nine types of HPV which cause approximately:

- 90% of cervical and anal cancers,
- 60% of penile cancers,
- 90% of genital warts, and
- other cancers of the head, neck and genitals.

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness where 10% of those infected could die and 10 to 20% of those who

survive can suffer permanent brain damage, hearing loss, or the loss of their arms or legs.

It is caused by several different strains of the meningococcal bacteria. The bacteria spread person-to-person by coughing, sneezing, or sharing things that have been in the mouth of a person with meningococcal disease. Anyone can get meningococcal disease but children younger than five are at greatest risk, followed by teenagers and seniors.

The meningococcal conjugate quadrivalent (Men-C-ACYW) vaccine protects against meningococcal disease caused by the strains A, C, Y and W.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a virus that attacks the liver. If the infection continues it can cause cancer and liver failure. Hepatitis B spreads through cuts or bites, sharing personal care items (e.g. a toothbrush), sexual contact, or direct contact with body fluid (e.g. blood) from someone who is infected.

Most children do not experience any signs or symptoms of infection until after the liver is already severely damaged. The younger a person is when infected with hepatitis B, the more likely it is that they will be infected for life.

The hepatitis B vaccine provides protection against hepatitis B. It does not protect against other types of hepatitis, like hepatitis A or C.

How are the vaccines provided?

Public health nurses provide the vaccines through immunization clinics held at your child's school. Your child may receive more than one vaccine at each visit. If your child misses one or more doses at the school clinics, or has an immune-compromising condition, please speak with a health care provider.

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Who should NOT get the HPV, hepatitis B or Men-C-ACYW vaccine?

Talk to your health care provider if you or your child(ren):

- have had a severe allergic reaction after receiving a previous dose of the HPV hepatitis B or Men-C-ACYW vaccine; or
- is/are allergic to any contents of the vaccine.

Anyone with high fever should postpone immunization until recovered. The vaccine can still be given if the illness is mild, like a cold.

Possible side-effects of the vaccines

Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of quality and safety. It is much safer to get the vaccines than to get HPV, hepatitis B or meningococcal disease. Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given. Some children may have fever, drowsiness, loss of appetite or an upset stomach. These are mild reactions and usually only last one to two days. Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) can be given for fever or soreness.

Acetylsalicylic acid-ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should NEVER be given to children because it can cause a severe liver and brain disease called Reye's Syndrome.

A severe allergic reaction is a serious but very rare side effect of getting vaccines. It is about as rare as being struck by lightning. Symptoms could include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat and face. It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes of monitoring after getting any vaccine. If symptoms occur after leaving the clinic, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate attention.

Scan here to watch CancerCare Manitoba's video on HPV and hepatitis B



Scan here to watch a video on meningococcal disease and vaccines



Report any serious or unexpected side effects to a health care provider.

Your record of protection

All immunizations are recorded in a person's immunization record in Manitoba's Immunization Registry.

This registry enables:

- your health care provider to find out which immunizations you or your child(ren) have received,
- the production of immunization records or notification to you about overdue vaccines,
- public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease.

For information on how to obtain a copy of your immunization record, visit:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/records.html.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information and/or that of your child(ren). You can have your personal health information and/or that of your child(ren) hidden from view from health care providers. For more information, please refer to: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/phims.html.

For more information on hepatitis B, HPV and meningococcal disease, read their factsheets, available at:

www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html.

For information on the school immunization program and to see this factsheet in another language refer to: www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/sip.html.

For more information on hepatitis B and HPV related cancers, visit CancerCare Manitoba's website: cancercare.mb.ca/vaccines.

You can also:

- talk to your health care provider
- call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; or toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257