

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine

Public Health – Factsheet for Parents & Guardians

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other medical intervention.¹ Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

What is human papillomavirus (HPV)?

Human papillomavirus (HPV) can infect many parts of the body in both girls and boys. While most HPV infections go away over time with no treatment, some can go on to cause some types of cancer that affect the reproductive areas as well as mouth and throat of both girls and boys.

HPV can cause abnormal cell changes in both males and females that over time can lead to cancer if left untreated. Many cancers that are caused by HPV do not have symptoms until they are quite advanced. In Manitoba, approximately 50 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year, and about 20 of these women die annually from the disease. In Canada, approximately 155 men are diagnosed with penile cancer each year, and about 39 of these men die annually from the disease. For these reasons, it is important for your sons and daughters to get immunized against HPV.

What is the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine provides protection against certain types of HPV. When it is given before exposure to the virus, it is very effective in preventing infection from two of the most common types of HPV, which cause approximately 70% of cervical cancers, 90% of anal cancers, 60% of penile cancers and other cancers of the mouth, throat, vagina and vulva.

The HPV vaccine is given as a series of two or three shots over a few months. The recommended number of doses depends on the age of the child when first immunized. It is very important for your child to get all of the injections in the series.

How is HPV spread?

Anyone, male or female, who has sexual contact with another person can get HPV. HPV infection usually has no signs or symptoms, so it is easy for people who are infected to pass it on to others without even knowing it. For this reason, it is important to immunize your child **before** the start of sexual activity.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine works best when it is given before exposure to the virus.

The HPV vaccine is offered free of charge as part of Manitoba's routine childhood immunizations, to girls in Grade 6 born during or after 1997, and to boys in Grade 6 born during or after 2005. In addition, boys born between 2002 and 2004 will also be eligible for the HPV vaccine free of charge, starting September 2016 as part of a catch up program.

Public health nurses provide the HPV vaccine in schools. If your son and/or daughter misses one or more doses at school, or has an immune-compromising condition, please speak with your doctor, public health nurse, pharmacist or nurse practitioner to obtain the remaining dose(s).

Who should NOT get the HPV vaccine?

Anyone under the age of nine.

Anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to a previous dose of any vaccine or to any of the contents of the HPV vaccine should speak with their healthcare provider.

Anyone who has a high fever should wait until they feel better to be immunized. The vaccine can still be given if the illness is mild, like a cold.

Those who are pregnant are advised to defer vaccination until after pregnancy.

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada

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Possible side effects of the HPV vaccine

Vaccines are safe. Health Canada has approved the HPV vaccines based on a scientific review of their quality and safety.

Common reactions to the vaccine include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Some people may have fever, nausea, dizziness, headache or an upset stomach. Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tempra®) can be given for fever or soreness.

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

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction. This can include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, **call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department for immediate treatment.**

Report any serious or unexpected side effects to a doctor, public health nurse, pharmacist or nurse practitioner.

Your record of protection

You child's immunizations may be recorded in Manitoba's immunization registry. This registry:

- allows your child's health care provider to find out which immunizations your child has had or needs to have;
- may be used to produce immunization records, or notify you or your health care provider if your child has missed a particular immunization;
- allows public health officials to monitor how well different vaccines work in preventing disease.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your information. If you need information on the immunizations that your child has received, contact your doctor, local public health unit or nursing station.

For more information about HPV and the vaccine:

Talk to your doctor, public health nurse, pharmacist or nurse practitioner.

Call Health Links–Info Santé in Winnipeg at 204-788-8200; toll-free elsewhere in Manitoba 1-888-315-9257.

Or visit:

Manitoba's Immunization Program website

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/index.html>



Government of Canada website

<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/immunization-immunisation/index-eng.php>

CancerCare Manitoba website

<http://www.cancercare.mb.ca/home/>

Canadian Cancer Society website

<http://www.cancer.ca/en/?region=mb>