

# Grade 8 / 9 School Immunization Program

## Public Health - Factsheet for Parents & Guardians

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Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention.<sup>1</sup> Vaccines help your immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

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**Every school year, public health nurses offer the tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis (Tdap) vaccine to students in grade 8 or 9.**

### What are tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis?

These diseases can cause serious complications including breathing problems and in the most severe cases, death.

**Tetanus**, commonly known as “lockjaw”, is caused by bacteria that can cause painful tightening and stiffening of muscles all over the body. These spasms can involve the head and neck, which may prevent chewing and swallowing, leading to breathing problems. Although rare, tetanus infections can be very serious and often deadly, particularly if the breathing muscles are affected.

**Diphtheria** is caused by bacteria that can make a thick covering (membrane) in the back of the nose and throat, which can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure, and in severe cases, death. Diphtheria sometimes causes skin sores, and contact with these sores can spread infection.

**Pertussis**, commonly known as “whooping cough”, is caused by bacteria which results in long coughing spells that make it hard to eat, drink and even breathe. This cough can last several weeks, and often occurs more at night. Pertussis can affect anyone at any age, but is particularly serious among babies less than a year old. It can result in pneumonia, brain damage, seizures and death.

### What is the Tdap vaccine?

The Tdap vaccine is approved by Health Canada and provides protection against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.

When the Tdap vaccine is provided as part of Manitoba’s routine immunization schedule, it is over 97 per cent effective in preventing tetanus and diphtheria, and approximately 90 per cent effective in preventing pertussis.

In order to be protected against these three diseases, “booster” doses are required over the lifespan. It is important to get all booster doses.

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**The good news: you can vaccinate your teenager against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.**

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If your teenager does not have all of his/her routine childhood vaccines, speak with your health care provider about catching him/her up. Some of these vaccines can be offered at the same time as the Tdap vaccine.

Specifically, if your teenager does not have all of his/her polio vaccines, the Tdap-IPV vaccine can be provided instead of Tdap. The Tdap-IPV vaccine is approved by Health Canada and provides protection against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio.

**Polio** is caused by a virus that can cause a sore throat, sudden fever, nausea, muscle weakness and pain. In severe cases, it can also affect the spinal cord or brain causing permanent paralysis and death. Polio is found in the stool (poop) of an infected person and is spread easily by a person coming into contact with the infected stool and then touching their mouth. Canada has been polio-free for over 20 years; any recent cases in Canada are from people getting infected when travelling to countries where polio is more common.

### Why should my teenager get immunized?

All adolescents should get a booster immunization against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, and should be caught-up on any previously missed vaccines in childhood.

Immunization is the best way to protect your teenager against these serious, and potentially fatal, infections. Vaccines help prepare the body to fight potential future exposure to the viruses by getting the immune system ready.

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<sup>1</sup> The Public Health Agency of Canada

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As protection from the Tdap vaccine can lessen over time, it is important to follow Manitoba's routine immunization schedule.

## How is tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis spread?

### **Tetanus does not spread from person to person.**

Tetanus spores live in dirt, dust and in the stool (poop) of animals or humans. Tetanus spores can get into the body through an open cut, scrape or burn on the skin.

Diphtheria and pertussis are spread easily from person-to-person by coughing, sneezing and/or close face-to-face contact. Diphtheria can also be spread by sharing food and/or drinks.

Serious complications from pertussis occur most commonly among infants. Often parents and siblings pass pertussis onto infants.

## Who should get the Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine?

The Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine is offered free-of-charge as part of Manitoba's routine "booster" immunizations to all adolescents 13 to 15 years of age, in grade 8 or 9 (varies by health region).

The Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine increases the protection that your teenager should already have from immunizations provided as part of Manitoba's routine childhood immunizations.

Public health nurses provide the Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine (one needle in the upper arm) during an immunization clinic at your child's school. If your teenager misses his/her Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine at school, or has an immune-compromising condition, please speak with a health care provider.

Individuals seven years of age and older who did not receive their childhood immunizations may need additional vaccines. Talk to your child's health care provider to determine which vaccines are needed to provide protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

## Who should NOT get the Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine?

Talk to your health care provider if:

- your child has had a severe allergic reaction after receiving a previous dose of the Tdap vaccine or to any of the contents of the vaccine.
- there is a history of Guillian-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of the administration of a previous tetanus-containing vaccine.

For specific details about the ingredients of the Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine, please visit the vaccine manufacturer's product monograph (links provided below) or speak with your health care provider.

There is no need to delay immunization because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you are concerned, speak with a health care provider.

## Possible side-effects of the Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine

It is much safer to get immunized than to get a vaccine-preventable disease. Health Canada approves vaccines based on a review of the quality and safety.

Common reactions to the Tdap (or Tdap-IPV) vaccine include soreness, redness, pain or swelling where the vaccine was given. Some people may have fever, drowsiness, dizziness, or an upset stomach.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) can be given for fever or soreness. If you are concerned about your teenager's reaction to the vaccine, speak with a health care provider.

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

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It is important for your teenager to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting his/her 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. Should any severe allergic reaction occur, **911 will be called and your child will be taken to the nearest emergency department or health centre.**

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

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## Your record of protection

Make sure your teenager's immunization record card is updated after he/she receives his/her immunization. Keep the card in a safe place!

Your child's immunizations will be recorded in the Manitoba Immunization Registry. This Registry:

- allows health care providers 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 a particular immunization has been missed.
- allows the province and public health officials to monitor how well vaccines work in preventing disease.

If you need information on the immunizations that your child has received, contact your health care provider.

The Personal Health Information Act protects your child's information. You can have your child's personal health information hidden from view from health care providers. For additional information, please contact your local public health office to speak with a public health nurse.

For a listing of public health offices, please visit:  
[www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html)

## For more information:

Talk to your health care provider.

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:**  
[www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/index.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/index.html)
- **Government of Canada website:**  
[healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/immunization-immunisation/index-eng.php](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/immunization-immunisation/index-eng.php)
- **Canadian Immunization Guide website:**  
[www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html?wbdisable=true](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/canadian-immunization-guide.html?wbdisable=true)

**Please visit *The Vaccine Factsheets and Resources* webpage for the most current factsheet:**

[www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html](http://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/div/vaccines.html)