

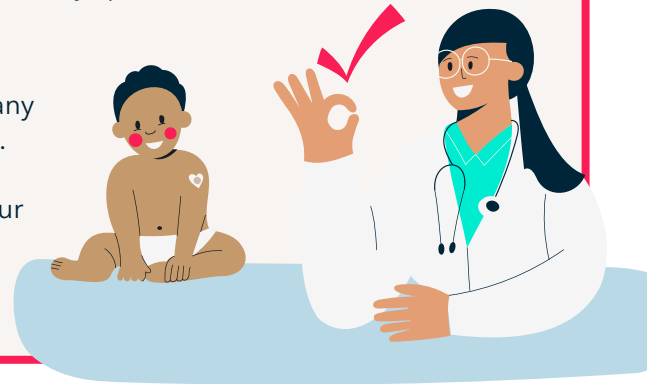
Childhood Vaccinations



Frequently Asked Questions by Canadian Parents and Caregivers

Why are babies vaccinated at such a young age? Can their bodies handle so many vaccines?

- Before babies are born, they receive antibodies through the bloodstream from the umbilical cord that can help to fight certain infections. But these antibodies don't last forever and wear off in the first few weeks and months of life. Vaccines are offered at this time to make sure the child stays protected after the initial antibodies have worn off.
- Humans inhale up to 6 million viruses and bacteria every day both indoors and outdoors.¹ This natural exposure is much higher than any exposure through vaccines, even when multiple vaccines are given. Advances in science over the past 40 years have also significantly reduced the number of antigens (parts of viruses or bacteria that our immune system can recognize) contained in vaccines, and the overall safety of childhood vaccinations has been established over many years of monitoring.

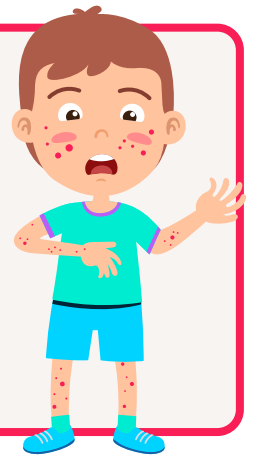


If a child doesn't have any medical conditions, can't their immune system fight off these diseases naturally?

- Not always. The immune system continues to develop and mature throughout childhood and adolescence,² with children under 2 years of age often at the highest risk of complications from vaccine-preventable diseases, including permanent brain damage or death.
- While children whose immune system is weakened from medical conditions or medication use are at higher risk of becoming severely ill, complications from diseases that we vaccinate against can still occur even if children do not have any medical conditions.

I don't know anyone who has been sick from things like whooping cough or measles. If these diseases are rare, is vaccination necessary?

- Yes. While we may not hear about these diseases often, there are parts of the world where vaccination isn't easily available, allowing the diseases to be brought to Canada through international travel. Even without travel, many of these diseases (e.g., whooping cough, measles) are still circulating in low levels in Canada and can affect people who aren't vaccinated against them.
- Vaccination helps to keep these diseases at low levels. If vaccination rates go too low, the diseases can return at higher levels and put more people at risk.



References

1. Prussin AJ 2nd, Garcia EB, Marr LC. [Total virus and bacteria concentrations in indoor and outdoor air](#). *Environ Sci Technol Lett* 2015;2(4):84-8.
2. Simon AK, Hollander GA, McMichael A. [Evolution of the immune system in humans from infancy to old age](#). *Proc Biol Sci* 2015;282(1821):20143085.

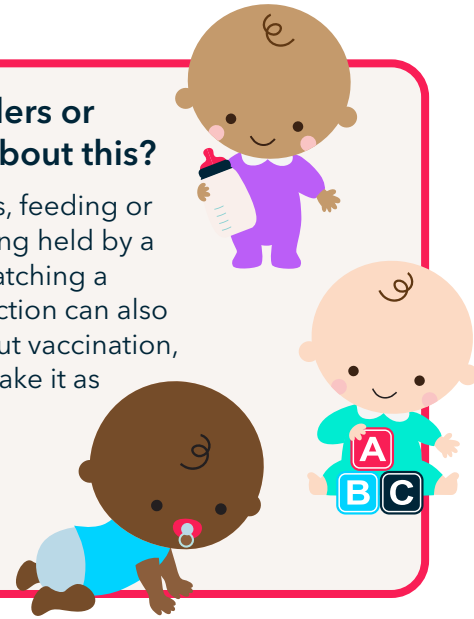
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I am afraid that children will become scared of health-care providers or needles if getting a vaccination hurts. Is there anything I can do about this?

- Many strategies have been found to reduce vaccination-related pain. For infants, feeding or nonnutritive sucking (e.g., pacifiers) during the vaccination can be effective. Being held by a trusted caregiver is calming. For all ages, distraction through conversation or watching a video can help, and numbing creams or gels applied to the skin before the injection can also be discussed with your health-care provider. If you or the child are nervous about vaccination, let your health-care provider know, as they can provide you with strategies to make it as comfortable as possible.
- Older children and adolescents can learn about what vaccines are, how they work and the benefits they offer. Knowing that a pinch that won't last long can protect them for years can help them to see the value of being vaccinated.



There are so many scary things posted about vaccination online. Are vaccines safe for children?

- Yes. Vaccines are very strictly regulated and go through many stages of research before they are approved for use in Canada. Ongoing monitoring also occurs to track the safety and effectiveness of vaccines over the years.
- It can be challenging to know which information posted online can be trusted. Be sure that you are looking at information provided by medical and scientific organizations that understand how vaccines work and who can interpret research findings. Be cautious when reading opinion pieces or observations from a single person or from organizations or companies that also sell alternative options.



Resources for Parents and Caregivers

- Canadian Paediatric Society. Caring for Kids resources. Available from: <https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/immunization>.
- Immunize Canada. CARD (comfort, ask, relax, distract) framework to prepare for vaccination. Available from: <https://immunize.ca/card>. For patient-friendly handouts, select "For parent and caregivers."
- Immunize Canada resources. Available from: <https://immunize.ca>.
- Health Canada. Vaccine development and approval in Canada. Available from: <https://canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/drugs-vaccines-treatments/vaccines/development-approval-infographic.html>.

