

School Immunizations during COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Should my child get immunized during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes. It's important you continue with your child's routine immunizations to protect them from other diseases. Immunization is a very good way to prevent certain diseases. Getting your child immunized helps to lower the risk of more cases or outbreaks of certain diseases.

Alberta Health Services' Public Health routine immunization programs are an essential service. They're open during the COVID-19 pandemic to help protect you and the rest of the public.

Will school immunizations be offered in school this year?

Because of the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine, there are some changes to immunization services. This includes a possible delay of school immunization programs, including immunization of grade 6 and 9 students. Public Health will work with schools to reschedule student immunizations, if needed. They'll use the signed consent from parents and guardians for the rescheduled date.

Do I need to sign a consent form for my child to be immunized in school?

Yes, if your child is under age 18 years you must sign a consent form for each vaccine to have your child immunized at school. If your child is recommended to have routine immunizations in school, you will get a package with a consent form and information about each vaccine that is recommended for your child. Your child will not be immunized at school without your consent.

Can my child get an immunization at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine?

Children age 12 or older can get any vaccine at the same time as, any time before, or any time after a COVID-19 vaccine.

Children under age 12 years, who are due for their school immunizations can get their COVID-19 vaccine on the same day as, any time before, or any time after their school vaccines.

If your child needs other vaccines, they should wait at least 14 days after getting a COVID-19 vaccine before getting another vaccine. If they got another vaccine first, they should wait 14 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. This helps you watch for any side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine.

If your child gets another vaccine on the same day or within 14 days before or after their COVID-19 vaccine, there are no safety concerns. Both vaccines will still work to protect your child. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions about your child's vaccine schedule.

Can my child get a COVID-19 vaccine in school?

At this time, the COVID-19 vaccine is not being given in school. But it's important for children age 5 years and older to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Go to ahs.ca/covidvaccine or contact a pharmacist or doctor's office to book an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine.

Children under age 18 years need a parent or guardian to give consent for their immunization. If a parent or guardian can't attend the appointment, they can give their written consent. If your child's appointment is at an Alberta Health Services site, please complete the consent form on www.ahs.ca/frm-21765.pdf and send it with the person that's taking your child to their appointment. In some cases, children under age 18 years may be able to give their own consent.

Can my child get influenza vaccine in school?

No, your child won't get an influenza vaccine at school. But it's important for your child to get an influenza vaccine.

Influenza and COVID-19 are respiratory infections. These infections affect your lungs and breathing. They can be very serious, especially for older adults and people with long-lasting (chronic) health conditions. As public health restrictions are lifted, we will see the return of other respiratory infections including influenza.

The symptoms of influenza can be the same as COVID-19. Getting immunized for influenza will lower your child's chance of needing to stay home and away from others (isolating) and being tested for COVID-19.

The influenza vaccine is the best way to protect your child and others from influenza. The best time to get immunized is usually in October or November before the influenza season starts. But your child can be immunized at any time during the influenza season. The season starts late fall and lasts through the winter.

Visit ahs.ca/influenza for information about where you and your child can get the influenza immunization.

How are students and school staff protected from COVID-19 during school immunization clinics?

The following measures help protect your child and school staff from COVID-19:

- Parents and guardians screen students for illness and contact with COVID-19 before they go to school using the Alberta Health Daily Checklist (open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-alberta-health-daily-checklist).
- Healthcare workers are screened every day for illness and contact with COVID-19.
- Students who have symptoms while at school are sent home.
- The immunization clinic space is set up to keep everyone distanced.
- The clinic space is thoroughly cleaned and cleaned often.
- The immunization team uses personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks. They also clean their hands often.
- Students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer when they get to the clinic and again when they see the nurse.

Does my child need to wear a mask when they get their school immunizations?

Please follow your school's policy for using masks. Your child will need to wear a mask if they go to a public health office for their immunizations.

My child has symptoms of COVID-19, can they still get immunized?

Children who have symptoms won't be immunized. Your child should **not** go to school if they have symptoms, or if they legally need to stay home and away from others (isolate).

If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, they need to isolate. Use an at-home COVID-19 rapid test if you have one to test your child. Go to alberta.ca/rapidtesting to find out what to do depending on your child's test result. Use the COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Albertans (ahs.ca/covidscreen) tool to get further instructions.

If your child develops symptoms while at school, or when they arrive for their immunization, they'll be sent home. They can get immunized when they feel well again or when they no longer need to isolate.

My child had a vaccine and now has COVID-19 like symptoms. What do I do?

Some side effects from vaccines are the same as [COVID-19 symptoms](#), such as fever and shortness of breath. Fever is a common side effect after a vaccine. Shortness of breath is rare.

Side effects from most vaccines start within 24 hours. For vaccines that protect against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella, side effects can start 5 to 12 days after the immunization. Side effects tend to be mild and could last 24 to 48 hours.

If your child has a fever or shortness of breath that start within the expected time of getting their vaccine, and they go away within 48 hours, they need to stay home and away from others (isolate). Once these symptoms go away, your child doesn't have to keep isolating unless they were told to isolate for other reasons.

If your child's fever or shortness of breath start after the expected time or last longer than 48 hours, or they have other symptoms such as cough, sore throat, or runny nose, your child needs to isolate. If your child has these symptoms:

- Use the COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Albertans (ahs.ca/covidscreen) to find out if your child needs medical care or to get tested.
- If you have an at-home COVID-19 rapid test, use it to test your child. Go to alberta.ca/rapidtesting to find out what to do next depending on your child's rapid test result.
- Go to alberta.ca/isolation to find out how long your child needs to isolate.

If your child only has redness, swelling, or soreness where they had the needle, they don't need to isolate.

My child wasn't at school on the day of their routine school immunizations. How will they get them?

Public Health will immunize your child the next time they visit the school. They'll use the consent you signed for their routine school immunizations. It may take more than 1 school year for your child to get all the doses they need of each vaccine. The school nurse will contact you if you need to bring your child to a public health office to be immunized.

If your child is learning at home, Public Health will let you know where your child can get the immunizations they need.

Can my child get their school immunizations if their school has an outbreak?

If you were told that your child's school has an outbreak, the dates of school immunizations may be changed. Public Health will make new dates for any school immunizations that are postponed.

My child is afraid of needles. How can I help them prepare for their immunization?

There are things you can do before, during, and after immunization to be more comfortable. Visit Alberta Health Services Commitment to Comfort at ahs.ca/vaccinecomfort for ideas that can help your child have a better experience.