

Preventing Sickness

You can help your toddler stay healthier by doing 3 simple things:

1. getting her immunized
2. washing her hands
3. keeping surfaces clean

Immunization

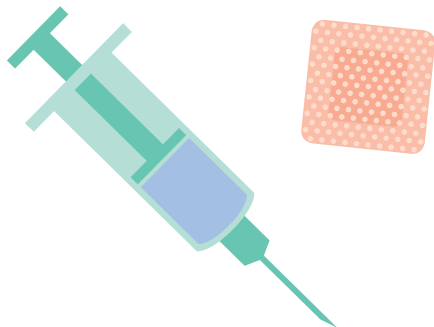
What is immunization (“inoculation” / “vaccination”)?

Protecting your child from a disease before it has a chance to make her sick.

How it works

Immunizations protect against diseases caused by germs such as bacteria and viruses. Immunizations help your child's body make antibodies to fight diseases.

Immunizations are usually given by injection, by nose (“intranasal”) or by mouth (“oral”).



Why immunize?

Immunization is the best way to prevent your child from getting serious diseases including:

- chicken pox (“varicella”)
- diphtheria
- flu (“influenza”)
- Haemophilus influenzae
- hepatitis B
- measles and German measles (“rubella”)
- meningitis
- mumps
- polio
- rotavirus
- tetanus
- whooping cough (“pertussis”)

Thanks to immunization, some of these diseases are now rare in Canada. But the germs that cause them still exist and can make any child who isn't immunized very sick.

? DID YOU KNOW

When you immunize your child, you're also protecting the wider community. When more people are vaccinated, disease can't spread as easily and those most at risk – the elderly and babies too young for vaccination, for example – are safer.



DID YOU KNOW

Vaccines included in the routine immunization schedule are free for B.C. children.

When to immunize

Different vaccinations are given at different ages. Children in British Columbia usually receive vaccinations at:

- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 12 months
- 18 months
- 4 to 6 years
- 11 years (Grade 6)
- 14 years (Grade 9)

The flu shot is given each year.

If your child has missed any of her immunizations or if she is going outside Canada and may need extra immunizations, talk with your health care provider.

If you have questions or concerns, call your immunization provider before your visit.



TRY THIS

Use the Child Health Passport (available through your public health nurse) or the immunizebc.ca app to keep track of your child's immunizations. Contact your public health unit or check immunizebc.ca for updates to the immunization schedule, too.



HOW TO

Prepare your toddler for an immunization

1. Just before you leave, calmly tell her she's getting an immunization that will help her stay healthy. Answer her questions honestly but soothingly. Use words like "poke" or "squeeze" instead of "pain" or "hurt."
2. Try not to let her sense any anxiety you're feeling.
3. Consider putting on a numbing cream or patch before your appointment. If your child is over 12 months old, ask your health care provider in advance where the immunization will be given so you'll know where to apply it.
4. Dress her in clothes that let you easily uncover her arms and legs.
5. Bring a comforting toy or blanket.
6. Hold her on your lap while she's getting the immunization. Comfort her by cuddling or breastfeeding her.
7. Try distracting her with a toy or by helping her do deep breathing.

Is it safe?

Immunization is very safe. Some may cause soreness or slight fever, but these side effects are minor and usually last only 1 or 2 days.



DID YOU KNOW

Serious side effects to immunizations (such as high fever) are very rare. Choosing not to immunize is much more dangerous, since the risks of the disease are far greater than the risk of side effects.

The flu shot

The influenza vaccine protects against the viruses expected to cause influenza in the next cold and flu season. It doesn't protect against the germs that cause colds. A flu shot is only effective for 1 year.

The flu shot is recommended for all children each year. It's free to those 6 months to 5 years old, for older children with serious health problems, and for children living with people at risk and those who visit health care facilities. Parents, babysitters and other caregivers of young children should also get a flu shot.

If your toddler is getting a flu shot for the first time, they'll need 2 doses, given 4 weeks apart.



Hand Washing

Hand washing is the best and easiest way to help prevent your toddler from getting sick.

Wash your hands and your child's often, especially:

- after changing a diaper or using the toilet
- after blowing your nose or your child's
- after touching animals, tidying up after them or cleaning the litter box
- when caring for a sick child
- when preparing food
- before eating



HOW TO Wash hands properly

1. Use plain soap and warm water.
2. Wash for 15 to 20 seconds – about the time it takes to sing *Happy Birthday* or a favourite song of the same length.
3. Rinse.
4. Dry well with a clean towel.



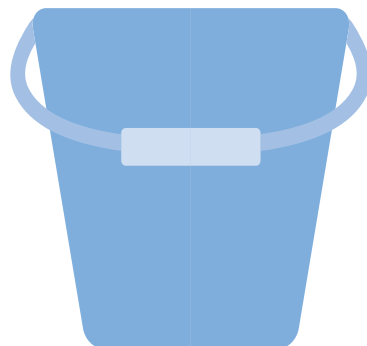
TRY THIS

If you can't wash your hands, rub alcohol-based hand sanitizer between your hands (and your toddler's) until the gel dries.



DID YOU KNOW

Antibacterial soap and cleaners help grow "superbugs" – germs that are too strong to treat with antibiotics. Use plain soap instead.



Keeping Surfaces Clean

You can help keep your toddler healthy by regularly cleaning surfaces including:

- kitchen counters, cutting boards and utensils
- high chairs, bibs and dishes
- strollers, cribs, changing tables and toys
- garbage bins
- pet toys, beds and litter boxes



HOW TO Make cleaning easier

1. Keep cleaning supplies handy, but locked away from your toddler.
2. Clean the most important areas first.
3. Use plain soap and water. To save time, try paper towels or disposable wipes.
4. Clean up vomit, diarrhea, blood and pet waste using 1 part bleach in 9 parts water. Wear rubber gloves.
5. Wash cleaning cloths often, and don't use them to wipe your child's face.



PARTNERS What You Can Do

Split up the household cleaning tasks with your partner. Have older children help, too.