

Q: What kind of vaccines does Island Health offer in schools?

A: For many years Island Health has worked in partnerships with school districts to provide common childhood vaccines against serious illnesses like tetanus and meningococcal disease. These clinics are held in Grades 6 and 9. Many families find this to be an easy and convenient option for immunization. This year Island Health is also supporting in-school COVID-19 immunizations in some schools.

Q: Are you holding COVID-19 vaccination clinics in all schools?

A: Island Health is not running clinics in all schools. School selection is based on many factors, including the age range of students and local vaccination rates. COVID-19 vaccines are currently only approved in BC for those born in 2009 and earlier.

Q: Why are you offering COVID-19 vaccinations in schools?

A: COVID-19 vaccines are supported nationally and provincially for everyone born in 2009 and earlier, as they have been shown to be effective at decreasing the risk of acquiring COVID-19 and having severe disease from COVID-19, and have low risks of harm. Island Health wants to make it as easy and convenient as possible for every eligible recipient, including children and youth, to access the vaccine if they want it.

Q: How do I know if you are holding a clinic at my child's school?

A: Island Health is working with schools to send home information packages in advance of clinics. These packages include consent forms and information regarding COVID-19 vaccines. Schools may also share information in newsletters and other communications with families.

Q: Can my child get vaccinated without my permission?

A: It is strongly recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunizations. However, minors who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine, and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations. This is called Mature Minor Consent, which is part of the Infants Act that outlines the legal position of people under age 19. The immunization records of a minor who gives their own consent will not be shared with the parent or guardian, unless the child gives permission.

Q: What is a 'mature minor'?

A: A child who is assessed by a health care provider as being capable to give consent is called a mature minor. A child who is a mature minor can make their own health-care decisions independent of their parents' or guardians' wishes.

Q: How can a health-care provider know if a minor can give consent for vaccination?

A: A health care provider can accept consent from the child without getting agreement from a parent or guardian if the health care provider determines that the child understands:

- The need for the health care
- What the health care involves and
- The benefits and risks of the health care

Q: Do students have to visit the vaccination area or get immunized at school?

A: Students are free to decide if they wish to meet with immunizers at their school or receive a vaccine. Island Health teams are available to answer questions, provide information and vaccinations if requested, but do not solicit students to participate.

Q: Why should my child be vaccinated if the most serious illnesses are among adults?

A: Although children are less likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19 they can:

- Get sick from COVID-19
- Be infected and not have symptoms
- Spread the virus to others
- Experience longer-term side effects if they do get infected

Children and youth with certain medical conditions may have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Maximizing vaccination rates in our local communities is essential to slowing transmission and minimizing risk to everyone around us.

Q: Are the side effects different for children and youth?

A: The most common side effects after immunization include minor soreness at the injection site. Some people may also have flu-like symptoms, such as fatigue, muscle aches and mild fever. These symptoms will go away on their own, typically after one to two days. In rare cases, some people have experienced inflammation of the heart (conditions known as myocarditis or pericarditis), following immunization with a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. Symptoms are most often mild and last a few days, with full resolution. Heart inflammation has also been seen with COVID-19 infection, at a higher rate than compared to vaccination.

Q: Is the vaccine safe for children and youth?

A: The mRNA COVID-19 (Pfizer and Moderna) vaccines were tested in children through clinical trials that compared the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine to a placebo. They also compared safety and effectiveness across different age groups. These studies show that the vaccines reduce the risk of acquiring COVID-19 and being harmed from COVID-19 in children aged 12 to 17, with a very low risk of harm from the vaccine.

MORE ANSWERS AND INFORMATION:

For answers to a wide range of **questions about COVID-19 vaccination in BC**, visit: <https://immunizebc.ca/covid-19-vaccine-frequently-asked-questions>

For information **about COVID-19 disease and vaccines**, including provincial statistics and data, please visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

For more information about **The Infants Act, Mature Minor Consent and Immunization** visit: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/infants-act-mature-minor-consent-and-immunization>

For information about **how vaccines are studied and tested** for children and youth visit Health Canada's '[vaccines for children](#)' website.