

Preventing Sickness

You can help your toddler stay as healthy as possible by doing 3 simple things:

1. getting them immunized
2. washing their hands
3. keeping surfaces clean

Immunization

What is immunization ("vaccination")?

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

How it works

Immunizations help your child's body make antibodies to fight diseases caused by germs, like bacteria and viruses.

Immunizations are usually given by needle (injection), by nose ("intranasally"), or by mouth ("orally").



DID YOU KNOW?

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

Why immunize?

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

- chicken pox ("varicella")
- COVID-19
- diphtheria
- flu ("influenza")
- German measles ("rubella")
- Haemophilus influenzae
- hepatitis B
- Hib ("Haemophilus influenzae type b")
- measles
- meningococcal disease
- mumps
- pneumococcal disease
- polio
- tetanus
- whooping cough ("pertussis")

Your child may be eligible for other vaccines, such as hepatitis A. Talk to your health care provider for more information.

Thanks to immunization, some of these diseases are now rare in Canada. But the germs that cause them still exist and can make a child very sick, especially if they're not immunized.



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
- Grade 6
- Grade 9

The flu shot is given each year.

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

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

For more information about immunization, visit [ImmunizeBC.ca](https://immunizebc.ca).



TRY THIS

Use the Child Health Passport (available through your public health or primary care nurse or see healthlinkbc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/child-health-passport-eng.pdf) to keep track of your child's immunizations. Contact your public health unit or check immunizebc.ca/children/immunization-schedules#Schedule%20for%20infants%20and%20young%20children for updates to the immunization schedule, too.



HOW TO

Prepare your toddler for an immunization

1. Just before you leave, calmly tell them they're getting an immunization that will help them stay healthy. Answer their questions honestly but soothingly. Use words like "poke" or "squeeze" instead of "pain" or "hurt."
2. Try not to let them 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 and how long before the appointment it should be put on the skin.
4. Dress them in clothes that let you easily uncover their arms and legs.
5. Bring a comforting toy or blanket.
6. Hold them on your lap while they're getting the immunization. Comfort them by cuddling or breastfeeding or chestfeeding them.
7. Try distracting them with a toy or by helping them do deep breathing.

Is it safe?

Immunization is very safe. Some vaccines may cause soreness where the needle was given or a slight fever, but these side effects are minor and usually last only 1 or 2 days.



DID YOU KNOW?

Serious side effects to immunizations 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 (influenza vaccine)

Young children are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill if they get the flu. The influenza vaccine protects against the viruses expected to cause flu in the next cold and flu season. It doesn't protect against the germs that cause colds.

Flu shots are given every year. It's free in B.C., and recommended for all children 6 months and older. Parents, babysitters and other caregivers of young children should also get the vaccine.

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

COVID-19 Vaccination

COVID-19 vaccines are authorized by Health Canada for children over the age of 6 months. Your child can get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other childhood vaccines. For more information please go to: bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/vaccines-children.

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
- after being in a public place
- after touching frequently touched surfaces



HOW TO Wash hands properly

1. Use plain soap and warm water.
2. Wash for 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. Check the label. Some hand sanitizers shouldn't be used by children or by adults who are pregnant or breastfeeding or chestfeeding.



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.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

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