

Immunization Information on the Internet

There is a lot on the internet about immunization (sometimes called vaccination). Some websites have accurate information and some do not. Here are questions to help you decide which websites to trust.

Who owns and pays for the website? What is its purpose?

The website owner should be easy to find. Look for “About Us”. Trusted websites do not hide their identity. There should also be contact information (e.g., email, phone, address).

The purpose of the website should be clearly stated. If the main purpose is to sell you something, this should be clear on the website.

The people giving the information should be medical experts in immunization, and this should be clearly stated. Anyone can make a website, but they may have no education or knowledge about immunization.

Is the information on the website based on science?

Good scientists test their findings many times. Their findings are then checked by experts (peer-reviewed) and printed in scientific journals. The scientists’ names are always added. Look for websites that mention scientific journals such as Canadian Medical Association Journal, Canadian Journal of Public Health, Paediatrics & Child Health, and Vaccine.

Good scientists are not afraid to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their studies and are open to questions. They do not make quick decisions without looking at all the facts. They may even say that more research is needed.

The best studies have hundreds of people. They compare results from one group with another (control group). Be careful about information that is opinion or based on only a few cases.

Is the information on the website up-to-date?

The website should review and update their information regularly. A date should be included to show when this was last done. Be careful about information that is years old or not dated at all—it may no longer be accurate.

Is the website supported by trusted Health Agencies? Does it link to accurate information?

The website should be supported by a health agency you can trust (e.g., Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, Health Canada, Canadian Paediatric Society, World Health Organization).

Trusted immunization websites have links to organizations that maintain immunization standards, such as the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI).

Do NOT use websites that:

- Are “junk science” – make claims that other scientists have not reviewed or confirmed.
- Give quick answers based on a conspiracy idea (e.g., “the hidden truth”).
- Are the views of only one person.
- Give information that is too good to be true (e.g., “Eat a lemon a day and you do not need immunizations”) or too bad to be true (e.g., “Millions die when they get these vaccines!”).
- Talk about “world-famous researchers, experts, or scientists”, but do not give names.
- Are written by people who do not have any education about vaccines and immunization.
- Focus on emotions rather than facts. A child getting sick or dying after a vaccine can sound convincing, but vaccines are often blamed because no other cause was found at the time. Scientific studies help find out if one thing caused another, or if it just happened at the same time by chance.

Recommended Immunization Websites

- Immunize Alberta www.immunizealberta.ca
- Alberta Health Services – Influenza Immunization ahs.ca/influenza/influenza.aspx
- MyHealth Alberta www.myhealth.alberta.ca
- Alberta Health <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/immunization.html>
- Immunize Canada www.immunize.ca
- Canadian Paediatric Society www.cps.ca

Your Child's Best Shot: A parent's guide to vaccination is available to order on this website. It may also be available at your local library or community/public health centre.

- Caring for Kids – Canadian Paediatric Society www.caringforkids.cps.ca
- Public Health Agency of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>
- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S.) <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Pan American Health Organization <http://www.paho.org/hq/>
- Every Child By Two (U.S.) <http://www.ecbt.org/>
- World Health Organization <http://www.who.int/immunization/en/>
- GAVI: The Vaccine Alliance <http://www.gavi.org/>

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811. Or visit myhealth.alberta.ca or immunizealberta.ca for health information online.