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 effective way to prevent certain diseases. Getting your child immunized is a very effective way to lower the risk of more cases or outbreaks of diseases that can be prevented with vaccines. 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 on file from parents and guardians for the rescheduled date.

Can my child get influenza vaccine in school?
No, but it’s important for your child to get their influenza immunization. Influenza and COVID-19 are both respiratory infections. They can be very serious especially for seniors and people with chronic health conditions. Because the symptoms of influenza may also be symptoms of COVID-19, getting immunized for influenza will lower the chance that your child will need to isolate and be tested for COVID-19. You and your child can be immunized for influenza starting on October 19. It’s important to protect yourself and others during influenza season which 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.

What’s being done to protect students and school staff from COVID-19 during school immunization clinics?
The following measures are being taken to protect your child and school staff from COVID-19:

- students are screened every day by parents or guardians for illness and exposure to COVID-19 before going to school using the COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Albertans (ahs.ca/testing)
- healthcare workers are screened every day for illness and exposure to COVID-19
- students who have symptoms while at school are sent home
- the immunization clinic space in the school is set up to maintain physical distance
- increased and thorough cleaning of the clinic space
- personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks
- students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer when they arrive at the clinic area for their immunization and again when they see the nurse

Does my child need to wear a mask when they get their school immunizations?
No. Your child may not need to wear a mask to get immunized in school. Please follow your school’s policy for mask use. 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. If your child has symptoms of COVID-19 they should stay home and away from others (isolate). Use the COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Albertans (ahs.ca/testing) tool to book a COVID-19 test and get further instructions. Your child should not go to school if they have symptoms, or if they’re legally required to isolate. If your child develops symptoms
while at school, or when they arrive for immunization, they’ll be sent home. They can get immunized when they’re feeling well again.

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

After getting immunized, some people can have side effects that are the same as COVID-19 symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- fever
- new or worsening chronic cough
- shortness of breath
- trouble breathing
- runny nose
- sore throat

If your child has side effects that are the same as COVID-19 symptoms, they must isolate even if you think the side effects are from the vaccine. Children will have to stay home with a parent or guardian. If your child only has redness, swelling, or soreness where they had the needle, they don’t need to stay home and away from others.

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’s side effects start within the expected timeframe and go away within 48 hours**

If your child’s side effects start within the expected timeframe and go away within 48 hours after the side effects start, your child doesn’t have to keep isolating and can return to school and other normal activities. But, if your child has been told to isolate for other reasons, they must keep isolating.

**If your child’s side effects start after the expected timeframe or last longer than 48 hours**

If your child’s side effects start after the expected timeframe or last longer than 48 hours, your child must stay home. Contact Health Link at 811 or use the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment for Albertans](https://ahs.ca/testing) to make an appointment for a COVID-19 test. If your child doesn't get tested for COVID-19, they must stay at home for 10 days from the start of their symptoms or until they no longer have symptoms, whichever is longer.

**My child wasn’t at school on the day of school immunizations. How will they get their school immunizations?**

Alberta Health Services (AHS) Public Health will immunize your child the next time they visit the school. They’ll use the signed consent you provided. It may take more than 1 school year for your child to get all the doses of each vaccine. The school nurse will contact you if you need to bring your child to the Public Health office to be immunized.

Parents of children who are learning at home will be contacted by Public Health to let them know where they can get the immunizations that are needed.

**Can my child get their school immunizations if their school is on alert or having an outbreak?**

If you’ve been notified that your child’s school is on “alert” or having an outbreak, the dates of the school immunizations may need to be changed. Public Health will make sure alternate dates for immunization are booked.