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 good way to prevent certain diseases. Getting your child immunized helps to lower the risk of more cases or outbreaks of certain diseases.

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 from parents and guardians for the rescheduled date.

Can my child get a COVID-19 vaccine in school?
Alberta Health (AHS), Public Health School Immunization Program is offering a dose of COVID-19 vaccine to eligible students in Grades 7 to 12, who are born in 2009 or earlier.

Your child can get a dose of Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine in school if they:
- have never had a COVID-19 vaccine (this will be their first dose)
- had their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at least 3 weeks ago (this will be their second dose)

Your child's school will send you more information including information about the vaccine and when the vaccine will be offered at their school. You will also be sent a consent form (https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/frm-21834.pdf) to complete and return to the school. A parent or guardian must sign the consent form for children under 18 years and send it back to the school if they would like their child to get a dose of COVID-19 vaccine at school. If your child needs another dose, COVID-19 immunizations can be booked online at ahs.ca/vaccine or by contacting Health Link at 811.

Can my child get influenza vaccine in school?
No, your child won’t get an influenza vaccine at school. But it's important for your child to get an influenza vaccine.

Influenza and COVID-19 are respiratory infections. These infections affect your lungs and breathing. They can be very serious, especially for older adults and people with long-lasting (chronic) health conditions.

The symptoms of influenza can be the same as COVID-19. Getting immunized for influenza will lower your child’s chance of needing to stay home and away from others (isolating) and being tested for COVID-19.

The influenza vaccine is the best way to protect your child and others from influenza. The best time to get immunized is early in the fall. This is usually in October or November before the influenza season starts. But your child can be immunized at any time during the influenza season. The season starts late fall and lasts through the winter.

As the influenza season is now over, plan for your child to get an influenza vaccine early next fall. Visit ahs.ca/influenza for information about where you and your child can get the influenza immunization.

How are students and school staff protected from COVID-19 during school immunization clinics?
The following measures help protect your child and school staff from COVID-19:
- Parents and guardians screen students for illness and contact with COVID-19 before they go to school using the Alberta Health Daily Checklist (open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-alberta-health-daily-checklist).
- Healthcare workers are screened every day for illness and contact with COVID-19.
- Students who have symptoms while at school are sent home.
- The immunization clinic space is set up to keep everyone distanced.
- The clinic space is thoroughly cleaned and cleaned often.
• The immunization team uses personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks. They also clean their hands often.
• Students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer when they get to the clinic and again when they see the nurse.

**Does my child need to wear a mask when they get their school immunizations?**
Please follow your school’s policy for using masks. 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)](https://www.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 were told they must isolate. If your child develops symptoms while at school, or when they arrive for their immunization, they’ll be sent home. They can get immunized when they feel well again or when they no longer need to isolate.

**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](https://www.ahs.ca). 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).

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.

**Side effects that start within the expected time and go away within 48 hours**
If your child’s side effects start within the expected time and go away within 48 hours after they start, your child doesn’t have to keep isolating. They can go back to school and their other normal activities. But, if your child was told to isolate for other reasons, they must keep isolating.

**Side effects that start after the expected time or last longer than 48 hours**
If your child’s side effects start after the expected time 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 (ahs.ca/testing)](https://www.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 their routine school immunizations. How will they get them?**
Public Health will immunize your child the next time they visit the school. They’ll use the consent you signed for their routine school immunizations. It may take more than 1 school year for your child to get all the doses they need of each vaccine. The school nurse will contact you if you need to bring your child to a public health office to be immunized.

If your child is learning at home, Public Health will let you know where your child can get the immunizations they need.
Can my child get their school immunizations if their school is on alert or has an outbreak?
If you were told that your child’s school is on alert or has an outbreak, the dates of school immunizations may be changed. Public Health will make new dates for any school immunizations that are postponed.