

# Immunization



## Background

- The Immunization of School Pupils Act (IPSA) requires that children attending school in Ontario must be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella.
- To attend school in Toronto, children must be immunized according to the IPSA
- The IPSA requires that all public health units in Ontario keep a file of immunization records on all students attending school between the ages of 4-18 or a valid exemption for students who for are not immunized.
- It is parents' responsibility to report their child's immunization record to the public health department. Toronto Public Health provides various reporting options.
- Children are required to have a number of vaccinations through their school years or to have a valid exemption on file.
- If the record is not complete, two warning letters are sent to the family at the most recent address on file at the child's school. The letter is in English.
- If the family does not provide proof of vaccination, the child is suspended from school until proof is provided. Many students are suspended each year. A majority of the suspensions last less than five days.
- Some doctors may report vaccinations but it appears that most don't.

## Research:

- Unreported research has shown that suspensions are highest in schools with the greatest percentages of newcomer students.
- In 85% of the cases where the record is incomplete, students have received the vaccination but it hasn't been reported to Toronto Public Health.

## Typical Immunization Issues

- Child has been immunized in first country but the immunization schedule in Ontario is different and the child has to be immunized again
  - Parent is concerned about health impact. Call the immunization line.
- To start school, child needs to be immunized but the family isn't eligible for a health card
  - TPH runs free immunization clinics, call the Immunization Line
- Parent gave the record to the school but the parent is getting letters from TPH
  - Call the immunization line to determine what is missing
- Child is suspended without notice. Parent didn't receive any letters.
  - Letters are sent to the last address on file at the school. Parent may have moved and not updated the school. Call the Immunization Line.

## Advocacy Hints:

- As soon as you become involved, call the Immunization Line and let them know that you are helping the family. Ask if they can extend the time limits so that you can help the family comply with the requirements.

## TPH Services

- Free immunization clinics are offered, health card not needed, see [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health)
- Free translation of vaccination records from other countries, for more information call 416-392-1250
- Multi-lingual information line 416 392 1250
- Three ways to report the information: online [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health), fax 416-338-2487 and mail to Toronto Public Health Immunization, 850 Coxwell Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4C 5R1
- Exemption process, call the immunization line
- Q & A for Settlement Workers about immunization
- Reminder postcards and multilingual flyers and posters alerting parents about the warning letters





## Have you updated your child's immunization record with Toronto Public Health?

It is parents' responsibility to report up-to-date immunization information to Toronto Public Health. Doctors do not report immunization information. Children with an incomplete immunization record or without a valid exemption on file with Toronto Public Health may be suspended from school.

416.338.7600 [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health) | Toronto Public Health

Every time your school-aged child receives a vaccine, report it to Toronto Public Health by one of these ways:

### Online



[toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health)

### Fax



416-338-2487

### Mail



Toronto Public Health Immunization,  
850 Coxwell Ave., Toronto,  
Ontario M4C 5R1

**Call the Immunization Information line at 416-392-1250 for information on:**

- Which vaccines your child needs to attend school
- Translating your child's immunization record
- What to do if you do not have your child's immunization record

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416.338.7600 [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health) | Toronto Public Health

## Did you get one of these letters?

Your child's vaccination record may not be complete.



**Children ages 4-17 who are not properly vaccinated may be suspended from school.**

### Need help?

Contact your child's school settlement worker.

Or for more info on:

- Vaccines required for school
- How to update your child's record and avoid suspension
- Free translation of your child's immunization record
- What to do if you do not have your child's immunization record
- Free immunization clinics

Go to [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health)  
or call the Immunization Information line 416-392-1250  
Interpreters are available Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

# Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule

Children should get the vaccines listed below. Ask your doctor about any vaccines your child has missed. Same colour boxes in a row indicate vaccines are given together in one needle.

| Vaccine         | Diphtheria *1 | Pertussis*2 | Tetanus*2 | Polio * | Haemophilus B (Hib)*2 | Pneumococcal*1 | Rotavirus *3 | Meningococcal | Measles *4 | Mumps *4 | Rubella *4 | Chickenpox (Varicella) | Hepatitis B <sup>5</sup> | HPV <sup>6</sup> | Influenza <sup>8</sup> |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 2 months        | ✓             | ✓           | ✓         | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓              | ✓            |               |            |          |            |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| 4 months        | ✓             | ✓           | ✓         | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓              | ✓            |               |            |          |            |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| 6 months        | ✓             | ✓           | ✓         | ✓       | ✓                     | ✓              |              |               |            |          |            |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| 1 year          |               |             |           |         | ✓                     |                | ✓            | ✓             | ✓          | ✓        |            |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| 15 months       |               |             |           |         |                       |                |              |               |            |          | ✓          |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| 18 months       | ✓             | ✓           | ✓         | ✓       | ✓                     |                |              |               |            |          |            |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| 4 – 6 years     | ✓             | ✓           | ✓         | ✓       |                       |                |              | ✓             | ✓          | ✓        | ✓          |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| Grade 7         |               |             |           |         |                       |                | ✓            |               |            |          |            | ✓                      |                          |                  |                        |
| Grade 8 (girls) |               |             |           |         |                       |                |              |               |            |          |            |                        | ✓                        |                  |                        |
| 14 – 16 years   | ✓             | ✓           | ✓         |         |                       |                |              |               |            |          |            |                        |                          |                  |                        |
| Every autumn    |               |             |           |         |                       |                |              |               |            |          |            |                        |                          |                  | ✓                      |

- Some infants need 4 doses of pneumococcal vaccine. Ask your doctor.
- Haemophilus influenzae type b vaccine is not necessary for children older than 5 years of age.
- Rotavirus vaccine: 2 oral (by mouth) doses should be given at least 4 weeks apart and both doses must be given before 25 weeks of age.
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine: should be given on or after the first birthday.
- Hepatitis B vaccine: 2 doses offered to all grade 7 students through school and community clinics.
- Human Papillomavirus vaccine: 3 doses offered to all grade 8 girls through school and community clinics.
- Adults, 19 to 64 years of age, who missed their diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough vaccine given between 14 to 16 years of age can get one dose as an adult to replace a diphtheria, tetanus vaccine that adults receive every 10 years.
- Influenza vaccine is recommended for all individuals 6 months of age and older.

\* Immunization against these diseases is required for school.

## Keep your children healthy. Protect them. Immunize them.

For immunization to work best, children should get their shots on schedule.

### Immunization is important.

Children who are fully immunized are better able to fight infections and stay healthy. Children missing vaccines or unimmunized children may become infected with a disease and become seriously ill. In Ontario, children who are not fully immunized may not be allowed to attend school or day care.

It is the parent's responsibility to report up-to-date immunization information to Toronto Public Health. Doctors do not report immunization information. Children with an incomplete immunization record or without a valid exemption on file with Toronto Public Health may be suspended from school.

Every time your school-aged child receives a vaccine report it to Toronto Public Health by one of these ways:

**Online:** [toronto.ca/health](http://toronto.ca/health)

**Fax:** 416-338-2487

**Mail:** Toronto Public Health Immunization  
850 Coxwell Ave  
Toronto ON M4C 5R1

**Have questions?**

**Call the Immunization Information Line at 416-392-1250**

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# Questions and Answers

## Information for Settlement Workers Helping Newcomer Families with Immunizations Questions

One of the important first steps for families who are new to Toronto and have children attending school is to give their child's immunization or vaccination information to Toronto Public Health (TPH). Then, every time a child has a needle, a parent should contact Toronto Public Health.

Every year TPH checks the immunization records of all students in Toronto schools. If TPH records indicate that a child's immunizations are not up to date, letters are sent to the family at the address on file at the school. If the record is not updated, the student may be suspended from school.

Below are answers to commonly asked questions about children's immunization records

### 1. Why do parents have to send immunization records to TPH?

By law, Public Health units are required to collect children's immunization information. All children must have an up-to-date immunization record or a valid exemption form on file. Students can be suspended if an up-to-date record has not been submitted in time.

Knowing the immunization status of all school children helps TPH to understand the health status of children and identify who might be at risk if there is communicable disease in the community.

Immunization schedules are not the same in each province and can be very different depending on the country. Parents who are new to Canada with children in school are encouraged to contact TPH soon after arriving to provide their school-aged child's immunization information. TPH helps families understand immunization information and services.

### 2. Newcomers to Toronto may not have a record of their child's immunization. What should they do?

To be considered up-to-date, TPH needs exact dates of each child's immunization. If parents do not have this information they should call the Immunization Information Line to speak to a nurse for help.

### 3. The child's record is not in English. Can it be translated?

Parents can give a **copy** of the record to TPH and it will be translated free of charge.

### 4. Do doctors send vaccination information directly to TPH?

No. Parents must send in the information. Every time a child has a needle, a parent should contact Toronto Public Health.

### 5. What happens when a parent receives a notice from TPH about their child's immunization record?

The front of the notice shows what information TPH has for the child and what needles are needed. The back of the notice shows how to give the information to TPH.

# Questions and Answers

Parents may report their child's updated vaccination information to TPH using **one** of the following ways:

- **Report Online:** [www.toronto.ca/immunization](http://www.toronto.ca/immunization)
- **Fax:** 416-338-2487
- **Mail:** Toronto Public Health – Immunization, 850 Coxwell Ave., Toronto, M4C 5R1
- **Call:** 416-392-1250

## 6. What if the information has been sent in and the family gets another notice?

The family should contact Toronto Public Health. It is possible that there is an error; vaccines may have been given too early or too close together or not received at all. For full protection, the correct vaccine has to be given at the correct time.

## 7. What if the parents don't send in the information?

The child may be suspended from school until TPH receives proof of the vaccination or a completed exemption form. Settlement workers and TPH staff can work with families to avoid this.

## 8. What if a child has been suspended and the family have updated information?

The parent should contact Toronto Public Health to update the child's immunization record. When the new information is up to date, the child can return to school immediately.

## 9. Which vaccinations are needed to attend school?

The complete series of vaccinations series includes; diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella. The number of needles depends on the age of the child. For more information see the TPH website: [www.toronto.ca/health/immunization\\_children/immunization\\_schedule.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/immunization_children/immunization_schedule.htm)

## 10. Are immunizations free?

Yes, immunizations are free for children. Adults can also receive some immunizations for free.

Free hepatitis B, meningococcal and human papillomavirus (HPV) immunizations are offered to grade 7 and 8 students in clinics held in schools. For information see the Toronto Public Health website at: [www.toronto.ca/health/immunization\\_children/immunization\\_clinics\\_schedule.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/immunization_children/immunization_clinics_schedule.htm)

## 11. What other immunizations are available free for children?

Many other important immunizations are free but not required for school attendance. These include vaccines against chicken pox, pneumococcal disease, haemophilus influenzae B, meningococcal disease, hepatitis B, whooping cough, and human papillomavirus. For more information see the TPH website: [www.toronto.ca/health/immunization\\_children/immunization\\_schedule.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/immunization_children/immunization_schedule.htm)

## 12. How can you tell if a child's immunization record is up-to-date?

This can be difficult for a parent to tell. Does the child's immunization record match the recommended Ontario immunization schedule? You can find this schedule on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at

[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/immun/pdf/schedule.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/immun/pdf/schedule.pdf)

To get help, parents can take their immunization record to a doctor or contact Toronto Public Health. Free translation services are available at TPH.

# Questions and Answers

## **13. What if the family does not have a doctor or an Ontario Health Card (OHIP)?**

TPH offers free immunization clinics for students who do not have a doctor or an Ontario Health Card. Clinics are located throughout the city and run from January to May. Flyers with times and locations are available to the settlement worker by calling the Immunization Information Line. Community Health Centers in Toronto may provide free immunization services to newcomers. For more information contact the Community Health Center in your neighbourhood [www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/chc/chcloc\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/chc/chcloc_mn.html).

If the family has an Ontario Health Card (but no doctor) they can also take the child to a walk-in clinic to be immunized. Call ahead to see if an appointment is necessary.

## **14. Some parents may not want their child vaccinated. What can they do?**

Parents can sign a notarized affidavit to exempt their child from vaccination on religious or philosophical grounds. The form is available by calling 416-392-1250 and speaking with a nurse.

## **15. Why is it important to keep an up to date record of immunization?**

Immunization records may be needed when starting day nursery or school; transferring to a school in another area; going to camp; starting university, college or certain jobs; receiving emergency health care; or travelling to other countries.

## **16. How should parents keep track of any new immunizations?**

When someone is vaccinated the doctor gives a yellow immunization record. When a new immunization is given the information should be added to this yellow card. Just like a passport, this is an important record. It should be kept in a safe place.