

November 29th, 2021



School District 19
(Revelstoke)

Dear Parents and Guardians of elementary aged children:

Last week provincial health officials announced the start of the vaccination program for eligible 5- to 11-year-old children in British Columbia. Attached is information from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Ministry of Health that includes links to information regarding the vaccination program and how to register your child.

Locally, Interior Health advises that they will be doing vaccinations only on site at the clinic at Queen Victoria Hospital and that Parents/Guardians must pre-book an appointment and of course, accompany their child. Instructions for registering and booking are attached in the program information.

As we head into the winter season, I would like to extend appreciation to all our families who are helping their children navigate these complicated times, and to the teachers and staff who continue to do their best to balance the needs of their students with the provincial health guidelines that we are expected to follow.

Thank you for working with our staff and for exercising patience and understanding as we continue to foster the positive connections that we have, and value, in our school community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Hooker', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Mike Hooker
Superintendent of Schools

Attachments

What are the benefits to getting children vaccinated against COVID-19?

While most children who get COVID-19 have a minor illness, a small number get very sick. Some children may continue to have health issues for long periods of time after the initial illness. Children are also able to pass on COVID-19 to other people in their families and communities.

Vaccinating children helps keep them safe as well as others around them – especially older adults, younger children and infants, and those with illnesses .

COVID-19 vaccine approval process for children

There is a very **strict process** to test and approve vaccines in Canada. These vaccines work and are safe for children aged 5-11.

Who is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine for children?

This vaccine is for any child between 5 and 11 years. If your child is 4 years old, you will not be able to get them vaccinated until after their 5th birthday. The vaccines are free and your children do not need BC Care Cards to receive them.



How can I explain how the COVID-19 vaccination works to my children?

Explain that the vaccine helps make sure they don't get sick by quickly fighting off the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine is so powerful that it even helps to protect the people around them, including their family and friends. **Kids Boost Immunity** has videos that explain more.

Who can provide consent for children to be vaccinated?



Parents/guardians, (including foster parents and prospective adoptive parents) and other custodial caregivers (for example, a grandparent who is raising the child).

Only one parent or legal guardian is required to give consent. The process for collecting consent may be different depending on the immunization clinic you attend.

Can children get the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as other vaccinations?

Yes. The COVID-19 vaccine can be given at the same time as other childhood vaccinations, including the flu shot.

These support techniques apply to other childhood vaccinations. Check if your child is up-to-date with their vaccines at children's immunizations schedules. Arrange with your healthcare provider to have any missed vaccinations given as soon as possible.

Before the appointment

- Children should be told about the injection close to the actual day of the vaccine. For school-age children, one day before may be appropriate.

- Encourage your child to ask questions. It's important they understand what will happen at the appointment and feel comfortable. HealthLink BC has more information on preparing children for vaccines: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/immunization-experience-child>



- Try the **CARD system** to help your child find their preferred way to prepare for the vaccine:
 - Comfort
 - Ask
 - Relax
 - Distract
- There are simple breathing techniques that young children can learn to keep calm. Children can practise **breathing exercises** by pretending they are blowing bubbles. A team from BC Children's Hospital has developed a game to help children practise belly breathing which is proven to manage anxiety. Access it at respiire.com/COVID-19.html

On the day of the appointment

- Some people find **numbing creams or patches** help. You can buy these without a prescription at most pharmacies. Apply them an hour before the appointment.
- Do not focus your child's attention on the needle with comments like "It'll be over soon, and you'll be okay," as this can increase stress. Instead, try distracting them with puzzles or chatting, and breathing techniques.
- Healthcare providers at immunization clinics are trained to work with children and can help you to support your child.



For more information on COVID-19 vaccination for children, including how to register your child, visit <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/vaccines-children>

After the appointment

- There are some common side effects such as pain, redness and itchiness at the injection site. These will pass quickly. Serious side effects are very rare, but if you notice any health changes contact 811 or your healthcare provider.
- One very rare side effect is myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart muscle. Most cases are mild and treated with rest and improve quickly. COVID-19 disease can also cause myocarditis and the risk of it from the disease is much higher than the risk from vaccination.
 - Symptoms to look out for:
 - Chest pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Feeling of a rapid or abnormal heart rhythm

If your child experiences these symptoms, seek medical help right away. Inform the healthcare provider that your child received a COVID-19 vaccine recently.
- COVID-19 vaccination has no impact on future fertility. There is no biological way for this to occur.

