

Publicly Funded Routine Vaccines

What are routine vaccines?

Throughout our lives, we may be exposed to many diseases. Most are mild, but some can cause serious illness and can even lead to death. Thankfully, vaccines can prevent or reduce the severity of many of these diseases.

Vaccines work by training your immune system to build resistance to specific infections. Some vaccines – called ‘routine’ vaccines – are recommended for almost everybody to receive at some point, and are given for free in Nova Scotia when people are eligible.

Many vaccines are given in childhood and set up lifelong protection, while some require additional doses later in life. Others are given to teens, adults and seniors when their risk for a disease is higher. People with certain health conditions are also eligible for additional free vaccines.

By getting vaccinated, you protect yourself and your community. Vaccination makes you **much** less likely to get certain diseases, spread disease to others and experience serious illness if you do get sick.

What do routine vaccines protect against?

Routine vaccines help protect you from serious illness and disability from diseases like measles, meningitis, pneumonia, whooping cough, tetanus and polio.

Several serious diseases prevented by routine vaccines, like measles and polio, are no longer common in Canada but still occur in other countries so we still need to protect ourselves from them. Other diseases are more common and can be serious and/or cause long-term effects, like cancers resulting from HPV or hepatitis B.

The following diseases are covered by routine vaccines given for free in Nova Scotia:

- Chickenpox (varicella)
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus influenzae type B
- Hepatitis B
- HPV (human papillomavirus)
- Influenza
- Measles
- Meningococcal A, C, W, and Y
- Meningococcal B
- Mumps
- Pneumococcal disease
- Polio
- Rotavirus
- Rubella
- Tetanus
- Whooping cough (pertussis)

Additional free vaccines are offered to people who are at higher risk for severe illness for diseases, such as Mpox and Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

You can learn more online at www.nshealth.ca/immunizations.

Where can you get routine vaccines for free?

Routine vaccines can be given by primary care providers (family doctors, nurse practitioners and family practice nurses), participating pharmacies and Public Health.

When are routine vaccines given?

Vaccines are given at different ages to improve protection against a disease. They are typically given when a person is at greatest risk for the disease they prevent and often lead to long lasting or lifelong protection.

See a full list of routine vaccine schedules: tinyurl.com/RoutineVaccinesNS

How can someone check what vaccines they've already received?

People can access their vaccine records through the YourHealthNS app or website (www.yourhealthns.ca). Parents can see records for children 12 years and under, while people aged 16 and older can access their own records.

Public Health can also provide records to people who complete [this form](#) (found at www.nshealth.ca/immunizations) and send it back to Public Health.

It's a good idea to check vaccine records before booking a vaccine appointment. If a person has questions about their vaccine records, they can contact their local Public Health Office (call 1-844-515-0675 and follow the instructions, or find an office at www.nshealth.ca/Public-Health).

Are vaccines safe?

Vaccines are safe, effective, and have saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health intervention.

Scientists and researchers spend years studying vaccines to make sure they work and are as safe as possible. Vaccines continue to be monitored for safety and effectiveness.

The most common issue that people have after getting a vaccine is pain or swelling at the injection site; this reaction is usually mild and will go away on its own. Some people are prone to fainting with vaccines. If this has happened to you before, let your immunizer know and they can help make the process safer and more comfortable for you. Serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can happen with any vaccine or medication, but are very rare.

If you have questions about vaccine safety, you can speak to your primary care provider, pharmacist or call Public Health.