

How to Talk to Kids about Getting Vaccinated



Children ages 5-11 will soon be eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. The Delta variant spreads easier, faster and makes people sicker. Vaccinating children will add an extra layer of protection against serious illness, and make returning to enjoying regular activities safer as we continue living with this virus. The following tips will help you talk to kids about getting vaccinated:

Keep Up to Date from Credible Information Sources:

It is important to be informed about the COVID-19 vaccines before talking to your children. We recommend using credible information sources and speaking with your family doctor, or a healthcare provider if you have questions. A great place to learn about COVID-19 vaccines is the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) website: tbdhu.com/youthvaccine

Listen:

- Ask your children to share what they know or have heard about COVID-19 vaccines, and actively listen to their responses.
- Like adults, children may have heard a lot of misinformation about vaccines during the pandemic, and may have fears or worries. Take these concerns seriously.
- A discussion with a trusted adult, such as a family doctor or other health professional, may help ease some of these concerns.
- If your child seems anxious, pretend play or drawing together may help younger children explore their fears and feelings. Older children may try writing down their feelings or use deep, slow breaths to help relax and keep calm.

Be Honest:

- It's important to be honest with children about vaccinations. Share information in an age-appropriate way.
- Children take their emotional cues from adults. If you are worried or have fears, your child will pick up on that. It is important not to overshare fears or worry.

Be Ready to Answer Their Questions:

It is normal for children to have questions about their health and vaccines. On the next page you will find a list of questions, with child-friendly responses.

Common questions from kids:

What is a vaccine?

A vaccine is used to make the body stronger to fight against an infection.

How do vaccines work?

Vaccines teach your body how to fight off an infection. It activates your body's immune system to be prepared before you get sick. Your immune system will be ready to know what to do if it ever comes into contact with a real infection.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes, vaccines are very safe. Millions of people are vaccinated every year, which helps to protect them from many illnesses. The COVID-19 vaccines have been tested by doctors and scientists to make sure they are safe and work well for kids and adults.

Why do I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine protects you from getting sick, and others around you. It also stops you from spreading the infection to others, including your classmates and family members. As more children and adults that get vaccinated, we will be able to end the pandemic and get back to doing the things we love in a safer way.

When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine is not ready yet for kids. It has to be approved by Health Canada first to make sure that it is safe and it works. While we wait, we must continue to keep ourselves and others safe by wearing a mask, washing our hands and physical distancing.

I'm scared of needles! Do I have to get a vaccine?

I know needles can be scary and might hurt. There will be a small pinch and then it is over. To make it less scary, we can practice and be prepared before going to get your vaccine. You can bring a special toy or device to keep you comforted. We can hold hands when it's time for your vaccine, and plan something nice to do afterwards to celebrate!

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health.