

Hepatitis B & Meningococcal Vaccinations

Questions students commonly ask:

How big are the needles?

The needles are the same size as other needles you get at the doctor's office for immunization. It is the same as the needles used for babies.

Will it hurt?

The needle feels like a pinch. It is very quick and most people find it is over before they know it.

Do they use a new needle for each vaccine?

Every person gets a new, sterile needle every time they are immunized.

Where do they give the needle?

The needle is given in the upper arm in the deltoid muscle. It is not given in the buttocks.

Do I have to get the needles?

The needles are not mandatory. Students are encouraged to receive the vaccines to protect themselves from getting hepatitis B and meningococcal disease.

Why grade 7 students?

Grade 7 was chosen in Ontario for several reasons. Students in grade 7 have the ability to be involved in the decision making process. Also, the program reaches students before their risk of exposure to hepatitis B and meningococcal disease increases. Grade 7 students are offered both vaccines at school-based clinics, which make it a good opportunity to get immunized against two serious diseases at the same time.

Why are there two hepatitis B needles for grade 7 students?

The vaccine used by Toronto Public Health for the grade 7 program requires 2 doses. All other age groups require 3 shots to be effective. It takes time for your body to build up immunity to the hepatitis B virus. Each needle gives a small dose of vaccine that allows your body to produce more fighter molecules (antibodies) against the hepatitis B virus.

Can I get the shot from my doctor?

Yes. You can get the hepatitis B vaccine from your doctor, but there may be a cost. The meningococcal disease vaccine called Menactra may also be given by your doctor, with permission from Toronto Public Health.

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

Some people may get redness or soreness at the injection site. A small number of people will feel tired and have a mild fever after having their shot, but this usually goes away within 24 hours. Contact a doctor or health care professional if you have a more serious reaction.

Where can I get more information?

Call the Immunization Information Line at 416-392-1250 or visit www.toronto.ca/health.