

April 23, 2020

Guidance for Immunization Services during COVID-19

Summary:

Primary vaccination series in infants and toddlers are an essential health care service and should be prioritized during COVID-19. In response to COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures need to be included when providing these services (see below).

When seeing clients as part of routine, urgent or necessary care, vaccinate according to Ontario's immunization schedule, including hospital inpatients and residents of an institution.

Avoid asking seniors and those who are immunocompromised to visit a clinic only for vaccinations at this time.

Primary series for infants and toddlers – should be provided at in-person visits, on time if possible

2, 4, and 6 six months: *diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, haemophilus-b (Hib), pneu-C13 & rotavirus*

12 month: *measles, mumps, rubella, pneu-C13 & meningococcal*

15 month: *varicella*

18 months: *diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio & haemophilus-b (Hib)*

Preschool Booster at 4 to 6 years (MMR & Tdap-IPV)

Can be provided at any time during this interval. Required if schools reopen in September.

Adolescent – Can be delayed until clinics or schools re-open

Teens: *diphtheria, tetanus & pertussis (Tdap)*

School-based: hepatitis B, meningococcal-C-ACYW, and HPV

Pregnancy – Continue to provide Tdap in every pregnancy and influenza in season

Seniors

Covid-19 illness can be severe for seniors. Avoid having seniors attend a clinic for vaccination only at this time. However, if the opportunity arises, please vaccinate.

Ages 65+: *Pneumococcal (pneu-C13 & penu-P23)*

High-risk clients

Covid-19 illness are more severe for individuals with pre-existing health conditions such as immunodeficiency or cardiovascular disease. If you are seeing these clients for urgent or other necessary visits, please vaccinate according the immunization schedule.

Post-exposure prophylaxis – Should be provided

Do not delay post-exposure prophylaxis, including rabies vaccine following higher risk animal exposures, hepatitis B vaccination to newborns of carrier mothers, hepatitis A vaccine for close contacts, etc.

Healthcare workers

Do not delay vaccinations for healthcare providers and workers in healthcare settings. They may be at increased risk of exposure to vaccine preventable diseases and transmitting them to others. Vaccines may include hepatitis B and MMR.

Delayed and Catch-Up Immunization Schedules

Most routine vaccines, if delayed, can be given at the earliest opportunity and 'off-schedule.' The **one exception is rotavirus**, which has a minimum and maximum age. The schedule is set to reduce the potential for adverse events, including intussusception.

No need to re-start a series for routine vaccinations

For vaccines that are given as part of a series, there is no need to restart a series, with the exception of cholera and rabies vaccine. If a dose of vaccine is delayed, it should be given as soon as possible and the schedule resumed, respecting the appropriate intervals from the latest dose. If the vaccination schedule has been altered and there is doubt about a sufficient immune response, post-vaccination serology can be obtained 7 to 14 days after completing the vaccination series (eg. rabies).

For optimal protection in the shortest amount of time:

- consider using the minimum interval between vaccine doses; and
- administer multiple vaccines at the same visit

Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC)

It is important to maintain proper infection prevention and control measures including use of PPE and disinfection practices when providing immunization during COVID-19.

IPAC strategies for immunization services:

- Limit one adult to accompany their child to a visit
- Pre-screen by phone that children or accompanying adult to stay home if sick
- Screen everyone for symptoms of respiratory illness. If present rebook their appointment
- Post on web and have signage asking clients not to attend clinic if they are feeling ill
- Signage on proper hand hygiene
- If feasible, have a dedicated clinic time and space for immunizations, by appointment only
- If feasible, screen, conduct the assessment, vaccinate and complete the 15 minute post immunization wait in the same clinic room.
- Avoid using the waiting room or reorganize room to ensure physical distancing measures
- Maintain 6 feet or more between individuals to maintain physical distancing
- Consider having patients wait in their vehicle, if feasible, and call them when it is their clinic time

For More Information

- [IPAC, PPE, Self-Monitoring & Disinfection](#), Public Health Ontario
- [MOH Coronavirus Guidance Documents](#)
- [Ontario Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule](#)
- [Canadian Immunization Guide, Vaccines and Immunization](#)
- [Product monographs in the Health Canada Drug Product Database](#)
- [TPH tips on Vaccine Storage & Power Outage](#)