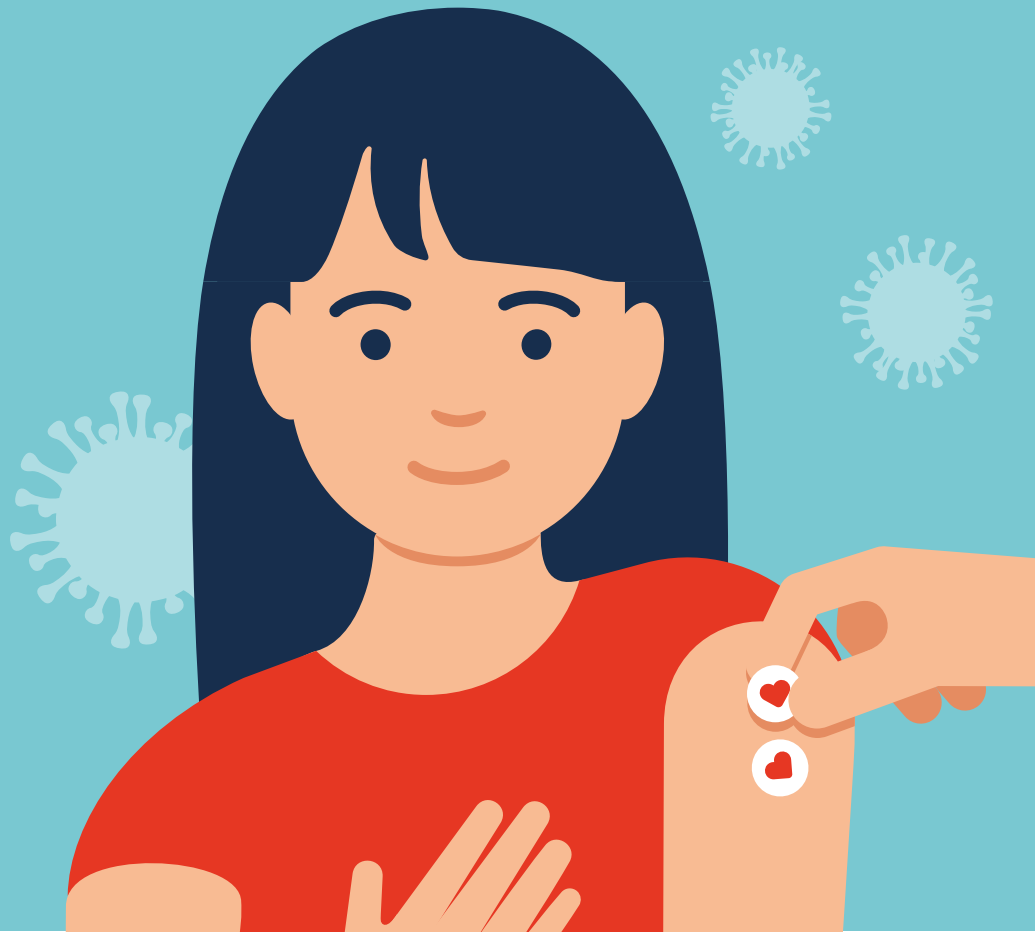
PSST!

Plan to Stay in Shape Today

Better protection starts with vaccination



In collaboration with: Pfizer

familiprix

Vaccination **is now a part of our lives, but that hasn't always been the case!**

In fact, we have to go back a few hundred years to Dr. Edward Jenner's discovery of vaccination, followed by the development of the very first vaccine by his better-known successor, Dr. Louis Pasteur. At that time, thousands of people died each year from infections, such as smallpox, a disease that has now been completely eradicated, largely thanks to the vaccine.

Today, after years of scientific progress and research on vaccination, there is a wide range of vaccines that protect us against **more than twenty infectious diseases**.

Although we receive most of our vaccines in our early years, vaccination must continue throughout our lives, even into adulthood.

But how do you know if you need a vaccine?

That's what you'll find out in this guide, designed to answer your questions about vaccination.

According to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccines prevent 3.5 to 5 million deaths each year!

In this guide

Immune system overview

Your body has its own defence system, called the **immune system**. Its job is to protect the human body against attacks by foreign invaders, such as bacteria and viruses that cause infectious diseases. To carry out its mission successfully, the immune system produces and trains its own little army: **antibodies**. These soldiers can be produced in two ways: by contracting the disease or after receiving a vaccine. Once you've had the disease, antibodies are ready to fight it off if it returns!

Vaccination is the safest way to produce these soldiers. It involves injecting an **inactive or weakened** form of the disease-causing microbe into the human body, allowing antibody soldiers to prepare to defend your body without having to suffer from the disease or risk its consequences, which can be very serious.

Antibodies can remain in your system for a very long time and "remember" past attacks. This phenomenon, known as **immune memory**, allows the antibody soldiers to identify the invader more quickly and stop it before it can cause damage.

Sometimes, antibodies need a booster shot to provide full protection; this is why certain vaccines must be administered again after a certain period of time.

How a vaccine works

1

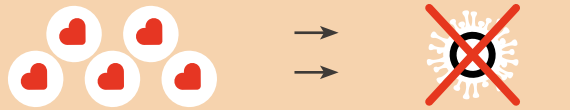
Active microbe

Inactive microbe or attenuated

Inactive microbe or attenuated introduced into the body

The **vaccine** introduces an **inactive** or **weakened form of the microbe** into your body.

2

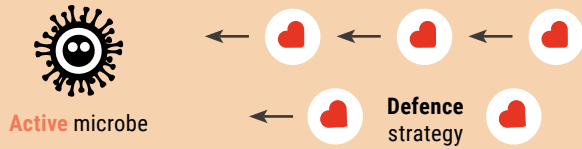


Defenses

Inactive or weakened microbe eliminated

The body **produces a defence mechanism (antibodies)**.

3



Active microbe

Defence strategy

When the actual microbe enters the body, the immune system recognizes it more quickly. You may still get sick, but the symptoms are often milder.

Did you know that...

A fever is a natural defence mechanism of your immune system? During an infection, your body temperature rises to create a hostile environment for foreign invaders and prompt antibodies to come to the rescue!

Why get vaccinated?

Diseases vaccines can help prevent

To date, vaccines have been developed for more than **25 diseases**. From whooping cough to chickenpox to hepatitis B, these diseases can be prevented with simple injections. Although vaccines do not offer 100% protection, vaccination remains the most **effective** and **safest** way to prevent infectious diseases.

Did you know that...

Smallpox officially became the first disease to be completely eradicated worldwide since 1980.

Should you get vaccinated? Let's look at the facts.

Although the decision to get vaccinated is personal, the benefits are collective. Beyond protecting yourself, getting vaccinated helps protect your parents, children, loved ones, coworkers, and everyone else who is too young or too sick to be vaccinated—or for whom vaccines haven't been effective. When most people in a community are vaccinated against a given disease, the risk of an epidemic or outbreak of that disease is greatly reduced. This principle lies at the heart of **herd immunity**.

How vaccination protects communities

1. No one is vaccinated

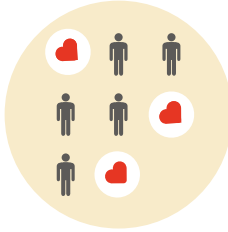
Group of individuals

A new infected individual enters the group

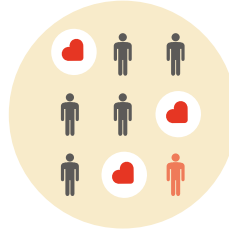
Result:

2. A few vaccinated peop

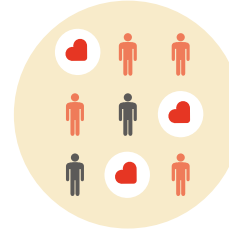
If a few people are vaccinated



What will happen?

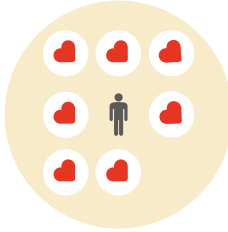


Vaccinated individuals are protected

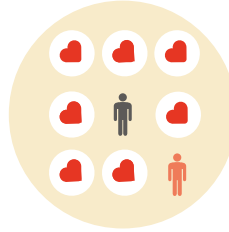


3. When most people are vaccinated

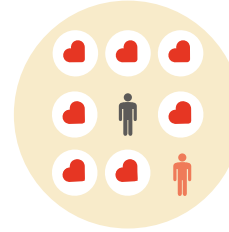
If enough people are vaccinated



What will happen?



There will be no outbreak



Conclusion: By getting vaccinated, you also protect others!

Myths and facts about vaccination

Myth: **Some diseases no longer exist or have nearly disappeared. Therefore, vaccines are no longer necessary for these diseases.**

Fact: It's important to understand that we no longer hear about these diseases largely because of vaccination. Furthermore, germs don't stop at borders. Certain diseases are still present in some countries you may travel to; this is particularly true of polio in certain Asian countries. Vaccination therefore remains essential to prevent their resurgence among people who are not vaccinated or have incomplete vaccination schedules.

Myth: **I've never been sick, so I don't need to get vaccinated.**

Fact: It's important to know that vaccine-preventable diseases can strike at any time, because the bacteria or viruses that cause them haven't completely disappeared. You are therefore always at risk of contracting one of these diseases.

Myth: **Some vaccines can cause serious illnesses.**

Fact: Vaccines are among the safest tools in modern medicine, as safety standards for vaccination are very strict. To date, scientific studies conducted worldwide have shown that the serious risks associated with vaccines are much rarer than those associated with the diseases they protect against.

Myth: A vaccine can cause the disease it protects against.

Fact: Vaccines stimulate the immune system of the person being vaccinated, but they cannot cause the disease. Most vaccines contain a small amount of an inactive or weakened form of bacteria or viruses, or even parts of these microbes that have been modified to prevent them from reproducing.

Myth: Too many vaccines overload the immune system.

Fact: Our immune system can handle multiple attacks simultaneously. Every day, our bodies are exposed to countless microbes. Scientists estimate that the immune system can recognize and fight several hundred thousand microbes at once. Vaccines do not in any way diminish its strength or capabilities.

Warning!

Be cautious about any information regarding vaccination circulating across various platforms, such as social media, websites, discussion forums, magazines, and television shows. Always make sure that the source of the information is credible and that the information provided is supported by recognized scientific references or studies.

Special considerations

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

During pregnancy, it is not recommended to receive **live-attenuated vaccines** (containing live but weakened strains of the virus because of the theoretical risk of transmitting the infection to the fetus. These include vaccines against measles, rubella, mumps, chickenpox and yellow fever.

Vaccination during pregnancy is especially important because it can help reduce the risk of complications and prevent infections from being passed to the fetus if the mother becomes ill. Because the fetal immune system is still developing, the fetus is more vulnerable to viral and bacterial infections. Some infections contracted during pregnancy can lead to complications, such as miscarriage, premature birth or serious illness, including pneumonia. Talk to your health care professional about vaccination to help ensure that you and your baby are well protected. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, ask which vaccines are not recommended for you and when they may be given safely, if needed.

Egg allergies

Although some vaccines contain trace amounts of egg protein, studies have shown that people with egg allergies can receive most of these vaccines without any special precautions. Check with your healthcare provider!

What are the side effects of vaccines?

Most vaccines cause very few side effects, and even when reactions do occur, they are often mild and short-lived (less than two days).

Localized reactions (at the injection site)

- Pain
- Swelling
- Redness
- Itching

Most common

Systemic reactions

- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Allergic reaction (hives, anaphylactic shock)

Rare

As a precaution, your healthcare provider will ask you to remain on site for **15 minutes** after receiving the vaccine. They can also recommend ways to help reduce any side effects.

Note

If your side effects persist for more than two days, you are strongly advised to consult your healthcare provider immediately.

Vaccines for everyone

When we think of vaccination, we most often think of vaccines given to babies and children.

However, even though most vaccines are given when people are very young, it's possible to contract a vaccine-preventable disease at any age. So vaccination doesn't stop with the shots given in elementary school! Even if someone has already received all the recommended vaccines as a child, some shots need to be updated to maintain their protective effect, while others can only be administered in adulthood.

For adults, the necessary vaccines are tailored to each individual based on the risks associated with their job, lifestyle, health status, or age. In fact, the recommendations will vary depending on whether you're a healthcare worker, a traveller, or someone with chronic health conditions.

Did you know that...

It's never too late to start or get caught up on your vaccinations.

Provincial immunization programs

In Canada, immunization services are overseen by public health authorities, which develop immunization programs. Each province has its own publicly funded immunization program. As a result, recommendations and the vaccines included—or not included—in the program may vary slightly from one province to another.

For example, in Quebec, the provincial program is called the "Quebec Immunization Program." Vaccines are administered to children and adults according to an immunization schedule that specifies the age at which each vaccine should be given and whether it should be administered in multiple doses.

The vaccines in the routine immunization schedule are recommended for everyone and provided free of charge to the public. The immunization schedule is reviewed periodically and is developed based on the principle that a vaccine should be administered at the age when the risk of contracting the disease is highest, when it will be most effective, and when it will cause the fewest symptoms. In addition, the number of doses administered, as well as the need for and timing of a booster shot, are evaluated to ensure long-term protection.

In addition to the basic vaccination schedule covered by the public health insurance system, the program also makes recommendations regarding other vaccines. These are not always offered free of charge, but may be fully or partially reimbursed by certain private insurance plans.

It is important to note that just because a vaccine is not free does not mean it is not important. Many of these vaccines can offer real benefits depending on your situation and are recommended by experts even if they are not covered by insurance.

In this document, we will refer to the PIQ on several occasions. To help you interpret it more easily, here are the main indicators used.

For each vaccine, an "Indications" section specifies the target groups. It also includes three codes: **G**, **R**, and **A**.

Here is what they mean:

G: Free
Vaccination is offered at no cost to the eligible individuals.

R: Recommended
Vaccination is recommended for this group because it provides proven benefits. It is not free, but may be covered in part or in full by insurance.

A: Authorized
Vaccination is permitted for this group and may be appropriate depending on the individual's situation. It is not routinely recommended, but may be an option to consider after consulting a healthcare professional.

Standard vaccination schedule

Vaccine that protects against:	Birth	At 2 months	At 4 months
Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)*	✓ Fall/Winter		
Diphtheria-Pertussis-Tetanus-Hepatitis B-Polio-Hib		✓	✓
Pneumococcus		✓	✓
Rotavirus		✓	✓
Meningococcal			
Measles-Rubella-Mumps-Chickenpox			
Diphtheria-Pertussis-Tetanus-Polio			
Diphtheria-Tetanus			
Hepatitis A-Hepatitis B			
Hepatitis A			
Human papillomavirus (HPV)			

* Preventive treatment (monoclonal antibody) that provides infants with pre-made antibodies to protect them against RSV when it is circulating.

Source (French only): https://msss.gouv.qc.ca/professionnels/vaccination/piq-calendriers-de-vaccination/calendrier-regulier-de-vaccination/
April 2026 version

At 12 months	At 18 months	Between 4 and 6 years	4th grade	3rd year of high school
✓				
✓				
	✓			✓
✓	✓			
		✓		
				✓
	✓			✓ Hepatitis B
			✓	
			✓	

Here are some key times when you should consider consulting a health care professional to make sure your vaccinations are up to date:

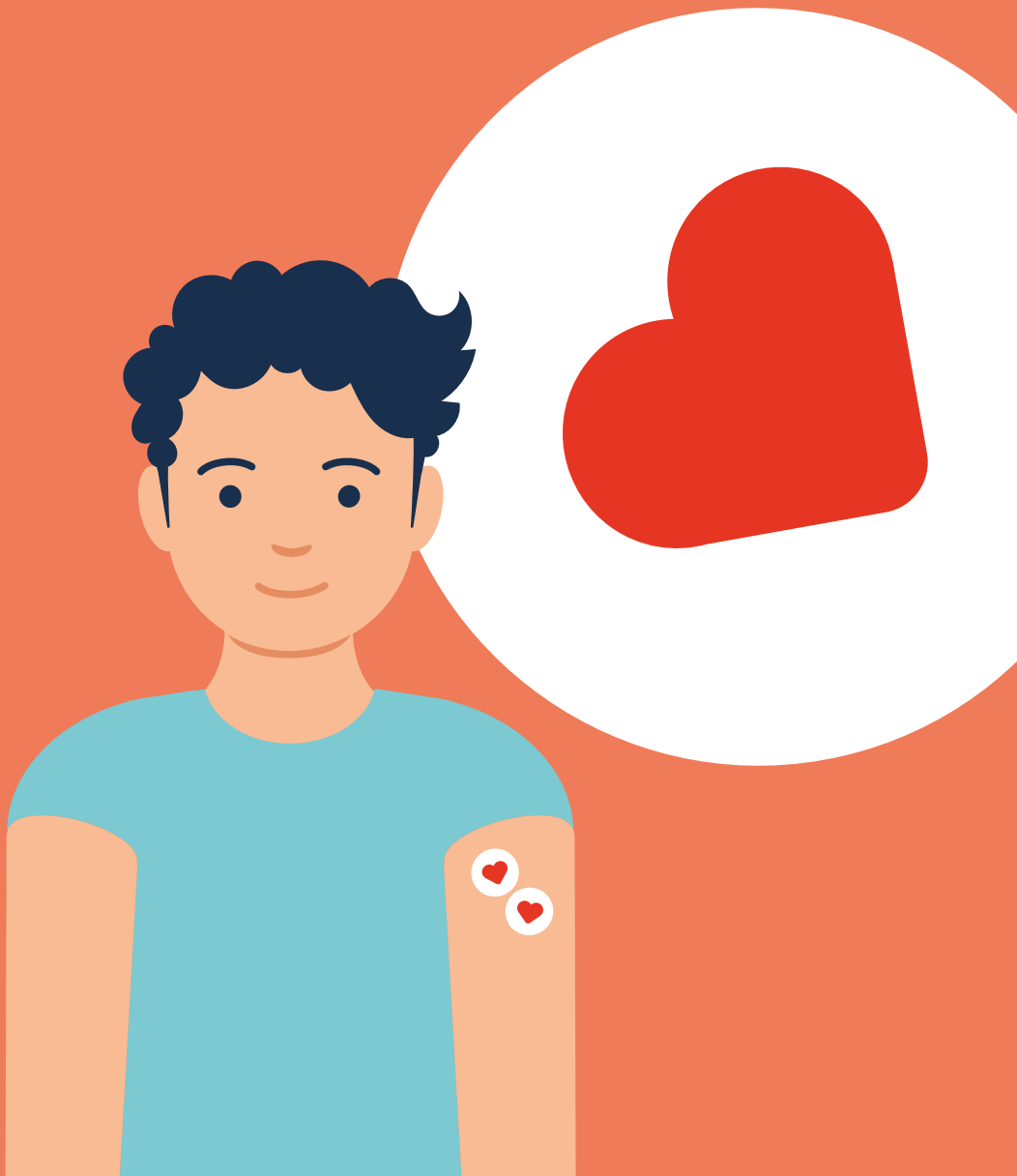
- Annually
- If you are pregnant
- If you are over 50
- If you have a chronic condition, such as diabetes or a lung and/or cardiovascular disease
- If you are about to start immunosuppressive therapy
- If you are planning to travel
- If you have a wound at risk of infection (e.g., tetanus)
- If you've been exposed to an infectious disease
- If your job puts you at risk (e.g., daycare, healthcare setting)
- If your vaccination status is incomplete or unknown—that is, if you're unsure whether you've received any vaccines in the past

Other situations may make you eligible for vaccination; if in doubt, consult your healthcare provider

Note

The following recommendations are from the Government of Quebec. Since this protocol is updated regularly, the current version may differ from the information contained on the following pages. In addition, this information is provided for informational purposes only. Under no circumstances should it replace the advice of a healthcare professional.

Recommended vaccines



Pertussis

What is it?

Pertussis is a highly contagious infection of the lungs and respiratory tract caused by a bacterium called *Bordetella pertussis*.

Also known as whooping cough, it is more severe in children under 1 year of age and can lead to several complications, such as pneumonia, seizures, and, in rare cases, brain damage and even death.

Transmission

The bacterium that causes pertussis can be transmitted through contact with secretions from the nose or throat of an infected person, typically via coughing or sneezing. Less commonly, transmission can occur through contact with contaminated objects, such as utensils or doorknobs.

Incubation period*

The incubation period for whooping cough is generally **7 to 10 days**, but can last **up to 21 days**.

Symptoms

Whooping cough usually begins with a runny nose and a cough, which becomes stronger and more frequent after **7 to 14 days**.

Symptoms may be less severe in older children and adults: cold-like symptoms accompanied by a persistent cough. In some cases, whooping cough can progress to pneumonia.

* Refers to the time between exposure to the virus or bacteria and the onset of symptoms.

Here are the main symptoms of whooping cough:

- Frequent and prolonged coughing fits
- Choking or vomiting after coughing
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty breathing

Duration of the illness

The illness lasts **6 to 10 weeks**, but may persist beyond 10 weeks in adolescents.

Contagious period

A person with whooping cough who has not been treated with antibiotics is contagious **for up to 3 weeks after** the cough begins.

A person with whooping cough who has been treated with antibiotics is contagious **for up to 5 days after** starting treatment.

A person who has stopped coughing is at much lower risk of spreading the disease.

Vaccination

The pertussis vaccine is part of the routine immunization schedule. Additional doses may be necessary in certain circumstances, particularly for pregnant women. Consult your healthcare provider if needed.

COVID-19

What is it?

COVID-19 is an infection caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2.

Symptoms often resemble those of the flu, and it is generally difficult to distinguish between the two without a diagnostic test. In some cases, the disease can lead to serious complications, including death.

Certain people are at higher risk of complications, including:

- Older adults
- People with weakened immune systems
- People with chronic illnesses

Transmission

The virus is transmitted primarily through close contact (less than 2 meters) that lasts for an extended period (more than 15 minutes).

Transmission can occur:

- Through contact with secretions from the nose or mouth (e.g., kissing an infected person)
- Through airborne particles (when a person breathes, speaks, sings, coughs, or sneezes)
- Through contact with contaminated surfaces, although this is a less common mode of transmission

Incubation period

Symptoms usually appear **5 to 7 days after exposure**, but can occur **anywhere from 2 to 14 days**.

Symptoms

Symptoms can vary from person to person and range from mild to severe.

Here are a few:

- Fever
- Cough (new or worsening)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty
- Sudden loss of smell (with or without loss of taste)
- Sore throat

Other possible symptoms:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Muscle pain
- Abdominal pain or diarrhea
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, vomiting

Duration of the illness

In most cases, symptoms go away within **1 to 2 weeks**. However:

- Some people may experience symptoms for a longer period
- Symptoms may persist for several weeks or months

This is referred to as *long COVID*.

Contagious period

An infected person may be contagious:

- **Up to 48 hours before** symptoms appear
- **Up to about 10 days** after symptoms begin

The duration may vary from person to person.

Vaccination

Vaccination remains an important tool for reducing the risk of COVID-19-related complications.

Although it does not always prevent infection, it helps to:

- Decrease the risk of COVID-19-related complications
- Reduce the risk of hospitalization

Currently, certain groups may be eligible for this vaccination periodically. However, recommendations may change over time. It is therefore advisable to consult a healthcare professional or refer to the PIQ to determine whether vaccination is recommended in your situation.

Diphtheria

What is it?

Diphtheria is a contagious disease caused by toxins produced by the bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*, which affects the mucous membranes—especially those of the respiratory tract—as well as the skin.

Transmission

The bacteria's toxins can be transmitted through:

- Direct contact with nasal or throat secretions, or skin lesions of an infected person or carrier (through coughing or sneezing)
- Contact with objects that have recently been exposed to the bacterium, such as shared utensils, glasses, or toys, followed by contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth

Incubation period

The incubation period for diphtheria is **approximately 2 to 5 days**, but **can range from 1 to 10 days**.

Symptoms

People with diphtheria are often asymptomatic, but early symptoms may include the following:

Respiratory diphtheria: Severe sore throat, high fever and chills, difficulty swallowing, weakness, malaise, and headache

Cutaneous diphtheria: Skin rashes or painful ulcers

Without treatment, diphtheria can lead to complications, such as respiratory problems and damage to the heart and central

Duration of the illness

With appropriate treatment administered early enough, most people with diphtheria survive the complications, but recovery is often slow.

Long-term effects may include paralysis, particularly of the face, as well as heart rhythm disorders.

Contagious period

A person with untreated diphtheria is usually contagious **for 2 weeks**. In rare cases, the contagious period may last longer than 4 weeks.

An infected person can be contagious even if they have no symptoms.

Vaccination

A booster shot may be necessary in adulthood. Consult a healthcare professional to determine if you need a booster shot, or refer to the package insert.

Flu (influenza)

What is it?

Influenza, commonly known as the "flu," is a contagious respiratory infection caused by the *influenza* virus, which can lead to serious complications in people with compromised health (e.g., older adults, pregnant women, young children, people with chronic illnesses).

Transmission

Because the flu virus is highly contagious, it can spread quickly from one person to another in one of the following ways:

- Droplets expelled into the air from the nose or mouth of an infected person who is coughing or sneezing
- Direct contact with secretions from an infected person's nose or throat (e.g., by kissing them)
- By touching your nose, mouth, or eyes after shaking hands with an infected person or touching contaminated objects

The flu virus can survive for up to 2 days on contaminated objects and up to 5 minutes on the skin.

Incubation period

The incubation period for the flu is **about 2 days**.

Symptoms

The flu is often confused with the common cold. Although they have similar symptoms, the common cold is more common and less serious than the flu.

Here's a chart to help you tell them apart!

Is it the flu or a cold?

Symptoms*	Flu	Common cold
Fever	• Common • Sudden onset • Temperature between 38 °C and 40 °C (between 100.4 °F and 104 °F)	Rare
Cough	Common, with a sudden onset	Common, but mild to moderate with phlegm (sputum)
Headaches	Common and sometimes severe	Rare
Aches and pains	Common and sometimes severe	Rare
Fatigue	• Common and severe • Duration: a few days, sometimes longer	Common, but mild
Nausea and vomiting	• Common, especially in children • Rare in adults • Often accompanied by stomach pain and diarrhea in children	Rare and mild
Nasal congestion or runny nose	Rare and more common in children	Common
Sneezing	Rare	Common
Sore throat	Common	Common

* Symptoms may vary depending on age and overall health. For more information: https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/flu-cold-and-gastroenteritis/differences-between-flu-and-cold

Duration of the illness

With rest and eating according to their appetite, most healthy people recover from the flu on their own within **5 to 7 days**.

Fatigue and coughing can last **up to 2 weeks**, or even longer.

Contagious period

An infected person can be contagious **24 hours before** symptoms appear and **up to 7 days after** symptoms begin. Young children and older adults, however, can be contagious **for up to 14 days after** symptoms begin.

Vaccination

The vaccine is recommended annually, in the fall, **for everyone**, but especially for the following people:

- Young children aged 6 to 23 months
- Children and adolescents (under 18 years of age) on long-term treatment with acetylsalicylic acid
- People aged 60 and older
- Pregnant women (with certain chronic conditions and/or who are in their 2nd or 3rd trimester)
- People aged 6 months and older with certain chronic conditions (e.g., diabetes, asthma, cognitive impairments, etc.)
- Residents of all ages in care homes or long-term care facilities
- Healthcare workers
- Immediate household members of the individuals listed above
- The immediate household members of infants under 6 months of age

Did you know that...

Because influenza viruses are constantly changing, a new vaccine is developed each year. That's why it's important to get vaccinated every fall.

Hepatitis B

What is it?

Hepatitis B is caused by a virus that infects the liver. The word “hepatitis” means “inflammation of the liver.” It is one of the most common vaccine- preventable diseases.

Transmission

Hepatitis B is highly contagious and can be transmitted even when the carrier has no symptoms. It can be transmitted from one person to another through contact between mucous membranes (e.g., those lining the mouth or genitals) and infected bodily fluids, particularly during sexual intercourse, sharing drug injection equipment, tattooing, piercing, or acupuncture equipment, and the use of personal items (e.g., toothbrushes, razors, nail clippers) and unsterilized medical or dental equipment. Pregnant women who are carriers of the disease can also transmit it to their newborns during pregnancy or at birth.

The hepatitis B virus can survive outside the body for **at least 7 days**.

Incubation period

The incubation period for hepatitis B **averages 75 days**, but **can range from 30 to 180 days**.

Symptoms

Symptoms of hepatitis may take **1 to 6 months** to appear. Some people will have very few symptoms, if any.

Here are some of the most common symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Joint pain
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Dark urine

Some people may also develop jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).

Duration of the illness

Acute hepatitis B usually lasts **3 to 6 months**.

Although most people recover from hepatitis B, the virus may persist in the body, making them chronic carriers.

Chronic carriers are more likely to develop cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Contagious period

The affected person must be tested to determine whether they are still contagious (a carrier). Until a healthcare professional confirms that the person has cleared the virus, the person remains contagious and can still transmit it to others.

Vaccination

For adults, hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for **people at risk** of contracting the disease, such as:

- Students and healthcare workers who may be exposed to the virus as part of their work
- People whose lifestyle puts them at risk of infection (injection drug users, people who have unprotected sex or multiple sexual partners, etc.)
- People with chronic liver disease (e.g., those with hepatitis C or cirrhosis)
- Travellers

The complete list of at-risk individuals can be found on the PIQ website at the following address (French only): msss.gouv.qc.ca/professionnels/vaccination/piq-vaccins/hb-vaccin-contre-l-hepatite-b/

Did you know that...

Hepatitis B is a disease that affects many travellers each year. The risk of contracting it while travelling may increase depending on your destination, the length of your stay, and your participation in certain activities during your trip. Consult your healthcare provider before your departure to get detailed information about your destination and to find out if you're protected against hepatitis B.

Mumps

What is it?

Mumps is a highly contagious infection caused by a virus that can live in the nose, mouth, eyes, and on the skin.

Transmission

The virus can be spread through:

- Direct contact (such as kissing an infected person)
- The air (when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes)
- Touching an object that has been exposed to contaminated mucus or saliva droplets and then rubbing your eyes, mouth, or nose

Incubation period

The incubation period is usually **between 12 and 25 days**.

Symptoms

The main symptom is painful swelling of the cheeks and neck (on one or both sides of the head).

Here are some other possible symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Ear pain
- Difficulty speaking or chewing swallowing
- Muscle aches
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite or difficulty

About one in three people have no symptoms.

Duration of the illness

Usually **3 to 10 days**.

Contagious period

An infected person can be contagious **up to 2 days before** symptoms appear and **up to 5 days after** they appear

Vaccination

This vaccine is part of the routine childhood immunization schedule and is **offered free of charge**.

Pneumococcus (pneumonie)

What is it?

Pneumococcal disease is caused by the pneumococcal bacterium and leads to infections of the ears, sinuses, meninges, bloodstream, or lungs. It can occur at any time of year, but is most common in the winter and spring.

There are several types of pneumococci. About 40 of them cause infections in humans, which are known as “pneumococcal infections.”

Transmission

The pneumococcal bacterium can be transmitted through:

- Contact with infected mucus or saliva (from coughing or sneezing)
- Contact with objects that have been exposed to infected mucus or saliva (such as utensils, glasses, shared toys, etc.) followed by contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth

Many people carry the bacteria (which lives in the nose or throat) without getting sick.

Incubation period

1 to 3 days after infection.

Symptoms

People who carry the bacteria in their nose or throat often have no symptoms. In some cases, the bacteria can cause infections, such as:

- Ear infections: pain in one or both ears, fever
- Sinusitis (sinus infection): stuffy nose and headache
- Pneumonia (lung infection): cough with thick mucus, difficulty breathing
- Meningitis (infection of the membrane surrounding the brain)
- Sepsis (presence of bacteria in the blood)

Symptoms and severity may vary depending on the person's age, overall health, and the type of infection

Duration of the illness

The duration of a pneumococcal infection **can vary** depending on the type of infection and when treatment begins.

Contagious period

An infected person is contagious until the bacteria are no longer present in their nasal or oral secretions and for **up to 24 hours after** starting antibiotic treatment.

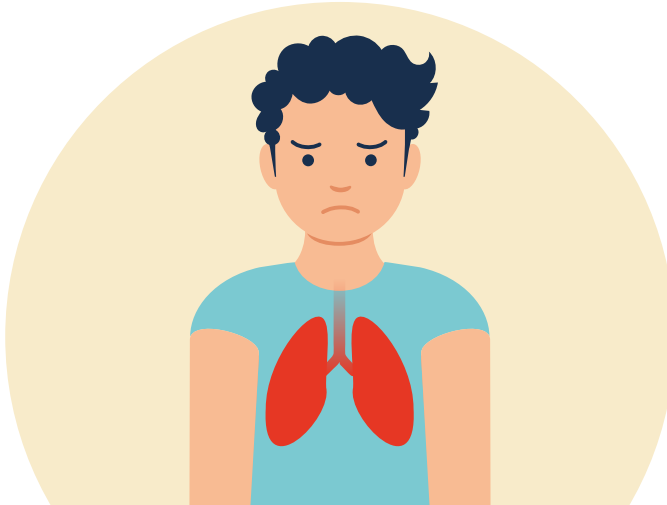
Vaccination

The vaccines used vary depending on the person's age and health status.

To find out the current recommendations regarding pneumococcal vaccination and the eligibility criteria for free vaccination, consult a healthcare professional and/or the PIQ.

Did you know that...

The risk of contracting a pneumococcal infection increases when you get the flu. That's why it's important to get the flu vaccine every year, especially if you're in a high-risk group.



Under certain conditions, pneumococcal infection can lead to serious complications if left untreated. That's why it's important to see a doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Pain when breathing

You should go to the emergency room if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Persistent or suddenly worsening difficulty breathing
- Blue lips
- Difficulty moving
- Severe neck stiffness
- Drowsiness, difficulty staying awake
- Confusion, disorientation
- Seizures (the body stiffens and the muscles contract in jerky, involuntary movements)
- No urine for 12 hours

Treatment

- Antibiotic treatment may be necessary for certain types of pneumococcal infections, so it's important to consult your healthcare provider if needed.
- Measures, such as staying well-hydrated and taking certain over-the-counter medications, can help relieve some symptoms. Your pharmacist can guide you on the best course of action.

Poliomyelitis (polio)

What is it?

Poliomyelitis, more commonly known as "polio," is a highly contagious infectious disease caused by the *poliovirus* and can lead to serious complications, including irreversible paralysis. Years of vaccination efforts have nearly eradicated the disease. However, it remains in some countries, particularly Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is currently no treatment for polio. Prevention through vaccination is all the more important.

Transmission

Poliovirus is highly contagious. It is transmitted primarily through direct contact with an infected person. Less commonly, it can be contracted by ingesting water or food contaminated with feces. You can also catch it through contact with an infected person's respiratory secretions.

Incubation period

The incubation period for polio is generally **7 to 14 days**, but can range **from 3 to 35 days**.

Symptoms

Most infected people have no symptoms. Those who do develop symptoms may experience the following:

- Fever
- Nausea
- Muscle pain
- Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Stiff neck or back
- General malaise

Duration of the illness

In general, patients experience symptoms for **2 to 10 days**. However, some people may develop long-term complications, such as paralysis.

In addition, people who have been infected with the *poliovirus* are at risk for **post- polio syndrome**. This is a disorder of the nervous system that can develop 15 to 40 years after the initial infection. This disorder progressively weakens the muscles and causes severe fatigue and muscle and joint pain.

Contagious period

The *poliovirus* is highly contagious and can spread easily, especially during the **14 days** before and after symptom onset.

Vaccination

It is important to consult your healthcare provider before traveling to determine whether you need a booster dose of this vaccine. You can check your eligibility for this vaccine at no cost by consulting the PIQ.

Did you know that...

Thanks to vaccination, polio—formerly known as "infantile paralysis" or "paralyzing disease"—has not been present in Canada since 1994.

Measles

What is it?

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that can survive in the nose, mouth, eyes, and on the skin. Thanks to vaccination campaigns, this disease is becoming increasingly rare. However, Quebec still experiences periods of measles outbreaks.

Children of daycare or school age are at higher risk of contracting this disease. However, unvaccinated adults are also at risk of catching it.

Transmission

The measles virus can be transmitted through:

- Direct contact (such as kissing an infected person)
- The air (when an infected person speaks, coughs, or sneezes)
- Touching an object that has been exposed to contaminated mucus or saliva droplets and then rubbing your eyes, mouth, or nose

Simply being in the same room as an infected person can put you at risk of contracting the disease, since the virus can survive for a few hours suspended in the air and spread.

Incubation period

Approximately **5 to 21 days after** infection with the virus.

Symptoms

Here are some of the symptoms of measles:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Rashes (in the form of raised red spots) that appear 3 to 7 days after symptoms begin
- Red eyes
- Drowsiness
- Irritability

Complications are rare but require prompt treatment. Possible complications include bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, and febrile seizures. Certain people are at higher risk of complications, particularly children under one year of age, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems.

Duration of the illness

When there are no complications, measles usually lasts **1 to 3 weeks**. The rash clears up in **4 to 7 days**.

Contagious period

An infected person can be contagious from **4 days before** the rash appears until **4 days after**. It is also possible to transmit the virus even without a rash, up to **10 days after** the first symptoms appear, and even longer in people with weakened immune systems.

Since this is a highly contagious virus, it is best to contact Info-Santé 811 before going to a doctor's office or the emergency room if you have symptoms similar to measles.

Vaccination

Since there is no treatment for measles and it is a highly contagious disease, vaccination is an important means of prevention.

It is recommended that you consult your healthcare provider to determine whether you are already immune. You can also refer to the PIQ, if necessary.

Rubella

What is it?

Rubella is a highly contagious viral disease. It occurs mainly in the winter and spring. The risk of contracting this disease is very low in Canada, but it remains common in many countries.

This disease primarily affects children and is generally harmless. However, rubella can cause a miscarriage or birth defects in the baby if a woman becomes infected early in her pregnancy.

Transmission

Rubella can be transmitted through:

- Direct contact (such as kissing an infected person)
- The air (when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes)

Incubation period

2 to 3 weeks.

Symptoms

Some infected people will have no symptoms.

Symptoms in adults:

- Swollen lymph nodes behind the ears and in the neck
- Cold-like symptoms (before the rash appears)
- Rash (small red or pink spots, slightly raised)
- Joint pain

Duration of the illness

About **3 days**.

Contagious period

An infected person may be contagious for about **1 week before** the rash appears and **1 week after**.

Vaccination

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against the virus. This vaccine is part of the routine immunization schedule. If you're unsure, we recommend consulting your healthcare provider to find out if you're already immune.

Tetanus

What is it?

Tetanus is an infection caused by a toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium tetani*, which is found in mud, soil, dust, and human and animal feces. The bacterium may also be present in animal saliva.

Transmission

The toxin can enter the body through a wound, a small cut, or a puncture caused by a contaminated object (e.g., a rusty nail).

Incubation period

The incubation period for tetanus is usually **3 to 21 days**.

Symptoms

The toxin attacks the nerves and causes muscle stiffness, cramps, and pain. There may also be difficulty swallowing and breathing.

Other symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Severe tremors or body spasms
- Fever
- Sweating
- High blood pressure
- Rapid heart rate

Tetanus must be treated immediately, as it can lead to serious complications, including respiratory problems if it affects the respiratory muscles.

Duration of the illness

The duration of the illness depends on the type of injury.

Contagious period

Tetanus cannot be transmitted from one person to another.

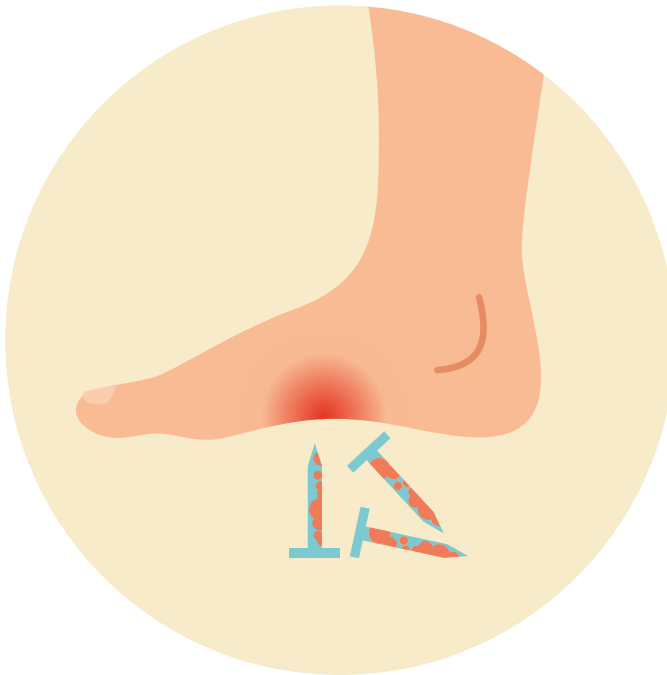
Vaccination

Tetanus vaccination is part of the childhood immunization schedule. However, booster shots are recommended for adults. We recommend that you check with your healthcare provider to determine whether a booster shot is necessary.

If you sustain an injury from a potentially contaminated object, it's especially important to seek medical advice. Your healthcare provider can refer you to the appropriate resources and determine whether a vaccination is recommended.

Did you know that...

Manual workers, gardeners and hunters should keep their tetanus vaccination up to date, as they are at greater risk of exposure.



Chickenpox

What is it?

Chickenpox (commonly known as “chickenpox”) is a disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus. In 15 to 30% of cases, the chickenpox virus can remain dormant in the body and reactivate as shingles several years later.

Transmission

As with shingles, the virus can be transmitted through direct contact with fluids from skin lesions.

Incubation period

The incubation period is **10 to 21 days**, with an average of 14 days.

Symptoms

Here are some of the symptoms of chickenpox:

- Fever
- Headache
- Runny nose
- General malaise
- A rash of blisters all over the body (including the scalp, the mucous membranes of the mouth, and the upper respiratory tract)

Duration of the illness

Approximately **7 to 10 days**. The blisters usually disappear after **2 weeks**.

Contagious period

Chickenpox can be transmitted **1 to 2 days before** the blisters appear and for about **3 to 4 days afterward**, until all the blisters have formed scabs.

Vaccination

People who have had chickenpox at or after age 1, or who have had shingles at any age, are considered protected against chickenpox. If you have any questions, consult your healthcare provider.

Note

The shingles vaccine is recommended for adults aged 50 and over.

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

What is it?

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection. It is caused by specific types of human papillomavirus.

There are more than 100 types of human papillomavirus, and some of them, when transmitted sexually, can cause warts or even cancers (e.g., cervical, penile, and anal cancers). The viruses can also infect other parts of the body, such as the hands and face.

Transmission

A person infected with HPV can transmit the virus even if they have no symptoms. The virus can be transmitted sexually during:

- Vaginal intercourse (penile penetration of the vagina)
- Anal intercourse (penile penetration of the anus)
- Oral sex (contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, vagina, or anus)
- Contact between partners' genitals
- Sharing sex toys

Sexual transmission can occur even without penetration, orgasm, or ejaculation. Even when a condom is used, HPV can infect unprotected areas.

More rarely, an infected mother can transmit the infection to her baby during childbirth.

Incubation period

The incubation period can range from 1 month to several years, but typically lasts between **3 weeks and 8 months**.

Symptoms

Most HPV infections do not cause any symptoms.

- Certain high-risk types of HPV can cause cervical cancer, anogenital cancer, and certain cancers of the brain and neck
- Other low-risk types of HPV can cause genital warts (condylomas)

Duration of the illness

Half of condylomas disappear within **4 months**, and most disappear **within 2 years**, with or without treatment.

Contagious period

Unknown after the condylomas have disappeared (with or without treatment)..

Prevention

The best way to prevent HPV is through vaccination. It helps reduce the risk of related cancers, including cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, anus, and penis.

Using a condom or a latex barrier is also recommended, even though it does not completely eliminate the risk of contracting the virus.

Vaccination

Ideally, the HPV vaccine should be administered before a person becomes sexually active. However, the vaccine can still be given even if the person has already contracted an HPV infection or developed related lesions (e.g., genital warts or an abnormal screening result).

This vaccine is now part of the school immunization program. However, if you have not already received it, you can check the Government of Quebec's immunization program to confirm your eligibility to receive it.

RSV

What is it?

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a highly contagious virus that causes infections of the respiratory tract and lungs. It can affect people of all ages, but is the leading cause of respiratory infections in young children. The virus is most prevalent from late fall through early spring.

Transmission

The virus spreads through **droplets** from the nose or throat of an infected person.

Incubation period

The incubation period is usually **2 to 8 days** after exposure to the virus.

Symptoms

Here are some of the possible symptoms:

- A runny nose or nasal congestion
- A cough
- Sneezing
- Wheezing
- Fever
- Loss of appetite and decreased energy

In some cases, particularly among infants, young children, and the elderly, complications may arise. These include heart problems and worsening of chronic conditions, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Respiratory complications (such as pneumonia, bronchiolitis, or respiratory failure) may also occur, leading to hospitalization or, in the most severe cases, death.

Duration of the illness

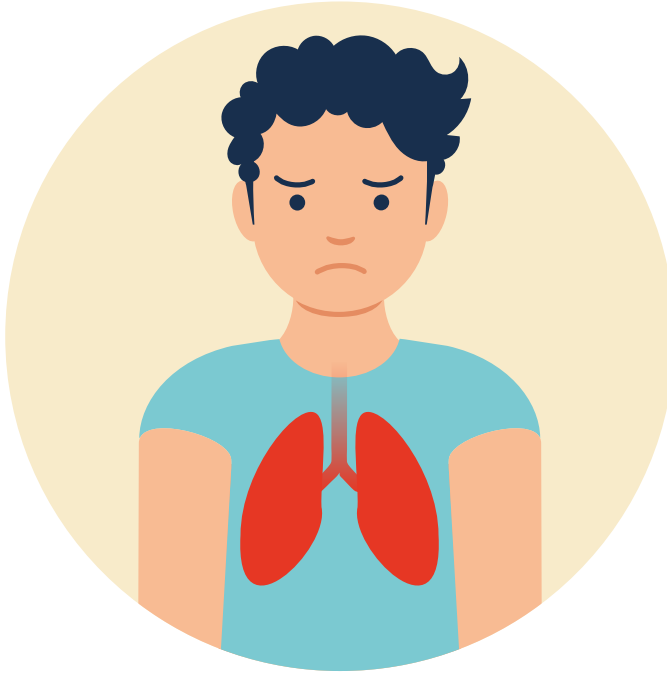
In general, RSV infection is mild and resolves on its own within **1 to 2 weeks**.

Contagious period

The contagious period is generally **about 8 days**, but can range from **1 to 21 days**. A person can be contagious even if they have no symptoms.

Vaccination

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against RSV infection. Several groups of people, including pregnant women, may benefit from the RSV vaccine. We encourage you to consult the PIQ or a healthcare professional to determine whether this vaccine is appropriate for you.



Shingles

What is it?

Shingles is the reactivation of the *varicella-zoster* virus. An initial infection with this virus causes chickenpox. The virus then remains "dormant" in the sensory nerve ganglia and can be reactivated later in some people whose immune systems are weakened by age or illness, causing shingles.

Shingles is more common in people aged 50 and older, as the immune system weakens with age, allowing the virus to multiply more rapidly.

Transmission

The *varicella-zoster* virus can be transmitted through direct contact with the skin lesions of an infected person.

Incubation period

There is no incubation period, as this is a reactivation of the virus. The disease remains contagious until the blisters have dried up.

Symptoms

The main symptom of shingles is a very painful rash consisting of blisters, which usually affects one side of the body (left or right). The rash often takes the form of a band (called "belt of fire" in medical jargon).

People who develop shingles may experience pain, tingling, or itching before the blisters appear.

Complications from shingles can be serious. Eye infections that can lead to vision loss, paralysis, secondary bacterial infections, and postherpetic neuralgia (disabling pain that persists even after the rash has cleared

Duration of the illness

Shingles usually lasts from **a few weeks to one month**. However, the pain may persist well after the rash disappears.

Contagious period

The virus is contagious from the time the lesions appear until they have scabbed over—which typically takes about **one week** after their onset. Although it is caused by the same virus, shingles is less easily transmitted than chickenpox.

Vaccination

The vaccine is recommended for people aged 50 and older. However, certain conditions may make you eligible before that age. Consult a healthcare professional or the PIQ to find out if you are eligible for this vaccine at no cost.

Even if it's not free for you, it's quite possible that it's recommended in your situation.

Did you know that...

It's possible to get shingles more than once in your lifetime? It's also possible to get the vaccine even if you've already had shingles. Experts recommend waiting at least one year between your last episode and receiving the vaccine.

What if you're travelling?

Vaccines against **hepatitis A, Japanese encephalitis, yellow fever, rabies, cholera, ETEC diarrhea, chikungunya, and typhoid** can be administered as a preventive measure before traveling.

There is no single recommended immunization schedule for all travelers, but recommendations may change regularly depending on outbreaks, the discovery of new diseases, or the season during which the trip takes place.

In fact, for travellers, recommendations regarding which vaccines to receive are tailored to the traveller's previous vaccinations, age, and health status, as well as the destination country, type of trip, itinerary, and the time remaining before departure. It is therefore advisable to consult a travel health specialist before departure to ensure your immunizations are up to date and to receive the most recent information regarding the health and safety of your destination.

Find a travel health clinic near you by visiting the Public Health Agency of Canada's website. Many pharmacies also offer travel health consultation and vaccination services. Don't hesitate to ask your pharmacist for more information.

Did you know that...

It is recommended that you consult your travel health specialist at least four to eight weeks before your departure to account for possible delays between vaccine doses and thus ensure the best possible immune protection during your trip.

Booster shots: It's never too late!

Some vaccines do not provide lifelong protection. Over time, the number of antibodies in our bodies can decrease, making us vulnerable to infections once again.

Booster shots may then be necessary to ensure ongoing protection against diseases.

Even if you think you've fallen behind on your vaccination schedule, it's generally not necessary to start all over again. In most cases, the series simply picks up where it left off!

Conclusion

While the discovery of the very first vaccine revolutionized healthcare, new vaccines continue to be developed today.

Although vaccination is the subject of much debate these days, the fact remains that vaccines provide **the most effective and long-lasting protection** against diseases regardless of your age.

Don't forget that vaccination also helps protect others!

Don't hesitate to consult your healthcare provider; they'll help you make an informed decision about vaccination.

Many pharmacies also offer vaccination services.
Ask your pharmacist today!

Sources and useful links

For more information on general vaccination

- **Canadian Public Health Association:** cpha.ca/fr/immunisation
- **Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (French only):** msss.gouv.qc.ca/professionnels/vaccination/protocole-d-immunisation-du-quebec-piq
- **Public Health Agency of Canada** canada.ca/fr/sante-publique/services/immunisation-vaccins.html
- **The Association of Allergists and Immunologists of Québec:** allerg.qc.ca/Information_allergique/5_5_vaccins_en.html
- **World Health Organization (WHO):** who.int/health-topics/vaccines-and-immunization#tab=tab_1

For more information on travel vaccinations

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html
- **Government of Canada:** canada.ca/en/services.html
- **Health Canada:** canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/travel-health.html

To find a location that offers vaccinations, you can visit:

- **Familiprix.com**
- **Info-Santé by calling 811**
- **Your CLSC**
- **Your doctor**
- **Your pharmacy**
- **Vaccines 411 by visiting**

PSST!

Plan to Stay in Shape Today

In this guide

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Only pharmacists are responsible for the professional activities of the pharmacy practice. They use various tools such as the PSST! (Plan to Stay in Shape Today) program.

In collaboration with: Pfizer

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