

Vaccines for children and teens in the Rheumatology Clinic

Many children and teens in our clinic are taking “immune-suppressing” medications. These medications act on the immune system to decrease inflammation, but may make it harder for their bodies to fight infections.

Vaccines are an effective way to prevent serious infectious diseases. This handout tells you about the vaccines that are safe for children and teens who are taking immune-suppressing medications.

What vaccines **are always safe** for children and teens taking immune-suppressing medications?

These vaccines are always safe because they do not contain live bacteria or viruses:

- Any vaccines for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, inactivated polio and/or Haemophilus influenzae type b (such as DTaP-IPV-Hib, Tdap-IPV, Tdap)
- Injected influenza vaccine (flu shot)
- Pneumococcal vaccines (such as Prevnar 13, Pneumovax)
- Meningococcal vaccines (such as Menactra, MenVeo, Menjugate, Bexsero)
- Hepatitis A vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Human papilloma virus vaccine (such as Gardasil)
- Rabies vaccine

What vaccines **should be avoided** by children and teens taking immune-suppressing medications?

Avoid these vaccines unless they are recommended by a vaccine specialist:

- Nasal influenza vaccine (taken by nasal spray)
- Oral polio vaccine (taken by mouth)
- Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (such as MMR)
- Measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine (such as MMRV)
- Varicella (chicken pox) vaccine
- Yellow fever vaccine
- Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (tuberculosis) vaccine

What vaccines are recommended **before a child or teen starts** immune-suppressing medications?

If a child or teen has not had these vaccines as recommended by Ontario's [immunization schedule](#), they should have them 4 weeks before starting immune-suppressing medications:

- Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (such as MMR)
- Varicella (chicken pox) vaccine

What vaccines are recommended **while a child or teen is taking** immune-suppressing medications?

Children and teens taking immune-suppressing medication should have the injected influenza vaccine (flu shot) every year.

We also recommend that they continue to receive routine vaccines that do not contain live bacteria or viruses based on Ontario's schedule, such as:

- Any vaccines for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, inactivated polio and/or Haemophilus influenzae type b (such as DTaP-IPV-Hib, Tdap)
- Pneumococcal vaccines (such as Prevnar 13, Pneumovax)
- Meningococcal vaccines (such as Menactra, Menjugate, Bexsero)
- Hepatitis A vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Human papilloma virus vaccine (such Gardasil)