



Hamilton

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## COVID-19 Vaccines for Children 5-11 Years of Age Consent to Treatment Fact Sheet

### Consent to Treatment

In Ontario the [Health Care Consent Act](#) is that law that sets out rules about when consent is required for healthcare and who can give consent.

Like other medical procedures, informed consent is needed before a healthcare professional will administer the COVID-19 vaccine. As part of that consent process, the healthcare professional will talk about:

- The COVID-19 vaccine being administered (e.g.: Pfizer or Moderna) and who is administering it (e.g.: doctor, nurse, pharmacist)
- The benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine
- The risks and side-effects of the COVID-19 vaccine
- The likely consequences of not getting vaccinated

In Ontario there is **no minimum age** for giving consent to treatment. A person is capable of giving consent to treatment or referral if she/he:

1. Understands the information that is relevant to making a decision about the treatment; and
2. Understands the consequences of a decision or lack of decision.

It is the health professional who proposes the treatment that is responsible for assessing the client's capacity for consent. If the client is capable, then the client makes the decision about their health care.

### What does this mean for children ages 5 to 11?

Children age 5 to 11 still mostly think in concrete terms. Children this age may only be able to think about one part of a situation at a time and have difficulty fully understanding how things are connected. Due to normal growth and development, many children age 5 to 11 will not be able to:

1. Understand the information to make a decision about COVID-19 vaccination;
2. Understand the potential consequences of getting or not getting vaccinated.

Given normal growth and development, the small but present risk of Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI), and the complexities of navigating the healthcare system in the event of an AEFI, the parent/legal guardian will be involved in the consent process at the point of care except in rare circumstances.



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Some children in this age group may be capable of consenting to the COVID-19 vaccine and will make the decision about their healthcare. This is most likely to be children who are close to the age of 12. The health care professional will make that assessment.

### **What if a Child is Afraid of Needles?**

Our clinics have been set up to support children. In Hamilton, all clinics are using the CARD system to reduce needle fear and anxiety. Parents/legal guardians have a big role to play in supporting their children.

A child is not to be restrained against their will to receive an immunization. There are two reasons that a parent/legal guardian or accompanying adult may hold a child during immunization:

1. To stabilize the arm and prevent movement in order to reduce risk of injury
2. To hug the child for comfort

### **School-Based COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics**

To make it easier and to provide more choice for parents/guardians to have their child vaccinated, Hamilton Public Health Services and their school board partners will be organizing the following school-based COVID-19 vaccine clinics:

**In-class clinics:** Immunizations for individual students at school with parent/guardian consent, and during the school day. A completed consent form is required. This option is based on parents'/guardians' comfort level with having their child immunized without them present at the school. A COVID-19 vaccine consent form has been sent to all families with a child/ren age 5 to 11 by their local elementary schools.

**After-hours school clinics:** Parents/guardians will be notified by their local school boards of any school-based COVID-19 vaccine clinic that is offered at, or open to their child/ren's school. Consent will happen at the time of vaccination.

COVID-19 vaccines for children age 5 to 11 are available across the city at clinics and pharmacies. For clinic locations, eligibility and hours of operations, visit [www.hamilton.ca/GetYourVaccine](http://www.hamilton.ca/GetYourVaccine).