

Mature Minor Consent for COVID-19 Immunization

Is parental/guardian consent required for an adolescent to book an appointment for COVID-19 immunization or to receive COVID-19 vaccine?

There is no minimum age for giving consent for any health care decisions in Nova Scotia, including immunization. In Nova Scotia, like other provinces and territories across Canada, the capacity to make a decision is not tied strictly to age. It is recommended that parents or guardians discuss COVID-19 immunization with their children including consent. However, adolescents who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions of the COVID-19 vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally book an appointment and consent to receive or refuse immunizations. Parental/guardian consent is not required for mature minors. Consent given by a mature minor cannot be overturned by parents or guardians. Immunization providers must assess the adolescent's ability to consent and ability to understand the information given. If the adolescent is assessed as being unable to give informed consent, a substitute decision maker must be involved, for example, a parent or guardian.

Who may give consent?

A person is capable of giving consent to be immunized, if they:

- understand the information that is relevant to their decision to consent to receive or refuse to be immunized; and
- understand the consequences of the decision to consent to receive or refuse to be immunized, and the consequences of being immunized or not being immunized.

What is the role of the parent or guardian?

Parents/guardians need to discuss COVID-19 disease and immunization with their children. Their child needs to know about:

- previous reactions to vaccines they may have had.
- present health concerns, including medications they are taking and allergies to antibiotics or components of the vaccine.
- their parents'/guardians' views on health and immunization.

Who is considered a mature minor?

A person under the age of 19 is considered a **mature minor** if, in the judgement of the immunization provider, they are able to appreciate the purpose and circumstances of the immunization and the consequences of giving (or refusing) consent