

# Making Informed Decisions About Vaccinations

*Activity*

**Resource:** Vaccination Talks Toolkit

**Grade(s):** 7 8

**Division(s):** Intermediate

## Curriculum Expectations

**Health and Physical Education:** A1: A1.1, A1.2, A1.4, A1.5, A1.6, D1, D2, D3

## Overview

- Students apply their critical thinking skills to pose and explore questions about common diseases and infections and the role vaccines play in preventing or reducing the risk of infection.
- Students use evidence-informed resources to gather information about vaccinations available at different stages of life to support an individual's health and well-being.
- Students sort the information gathered to decide on the information they think might be useful to them to make reasoned decisions about vaccinations and their personal health and well-being.

## Materials Needed

- Access to a shared document (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool)
- Access to available evidence-informed information about vaccinations
- **T-Charts** (chart paper and markers or online interactive tool)

## Learning Goals

- We are learning about common diseases and infections and the role vaccines play in preventing or reducing the risk of infection.
- We are learning to gather information to answer our questions about vaccinations available at different life stages to support an individual's health and well-being.
- We are learning how to sort information to decide what we need to make reasoned decisions about vaccinations and our personal health and well-being.

## Sample Success Criteria

- I can identify common diseases and infections and the role of vaccines in preventing or reducing the risk of infection.
- I can compare and contrast information gathered about vaccinations available at different life stages to support an individual's health and well-being.
- I can use a decision-making process to make reasoned decisions about vaccinations and my personal health and well-being.

## Opportunities for Assessment

- During the Minds On, use the large group discussion to assess students' understanding of how to make informed decisions related to their health.
- During the Action, use the completed Mind Maps to assess students' understanding of common illnesses, infections, and the role of vaccines.
- At the end of the Consolidation, use the completed decision-making graphic organizers and the Exit Cards to assess student application of a decision-making process to make reasoned decisions about their personal health and well-being.

## Minds On

Facilitate a large group discussion about strategies for effective decision-making using the following teacher prompt.

**Teacher prompt:** “All decisions, especially ones about your health, require you to look at all sides of the issue. How can you do that? What does it look like?”

*Student responses:*

- “You need to identify the decision you are trying to make. This will help you decide on the information you need to gather.”
- “You then gather current and relevant information for your decision. You need to make sure you gather information about all sides of an issue. This helps you avoid only gathering information that contains one point of view.”
- “You need to make sure you have enough information to make an informed decision and that it comes from a valid source.”
- “It is important to take time to consider the pros and cons of any decision you are making and how those decisions will affect both you and others.”
- “It is helpful to think about all alternatives you can consider when making your decision.”
- “Depending on the decision you are trying to make, it is helpful to ask others you trust to help you weigh the pros and cons and consider the alternatives.”
- “When you make your decision, it is important to tell others who your decision may impact.”

Using **Direct Instruction**, explain to students that they will practice their decision-making skills by investigating common illnesses and the role of vaccines in preventing or reducing the risk of infection. They will then use the information gathered and a decision-making process to make a reasoned decision about vaccinations and their personal health and well-being.

## Action

Share the Learning Goals with students and co-construct the Success Criteria. Divide students into groups of five and provide access to a shared document. Have groups write the following words in the centre of their shared document: Common Diseases, Infections and Vaccines. Share the following sample questions about diseases, infections and the role of vaccines in preventing or reducing the risk of infection for students to reference. Use a [Mind Map](#) strategy to have groups generate and record additional questions they may have about common illnesses, infections and vaccines. Invite groups to share any additional questions they would like to investigate with the class. Record additional questions for groups to access.

*Sample questions might include:*

- “What are some common diseases and infections that are contagious?”
- “How do different diseases and common infections impact a person’s body and health? What are the symptoms?”
- “How can vaccinations prevent these diseases and infections?”
- “Can vaccines be harmful?”
- “What vaccines are available for someone my age?”
- “Are there other ways to manage infections other than vaccination?”
- “Why might a person not get vaccinated?”
- “Where do people get vaccinated?”
- “What do I need to know to make an informed decision about vaccinations?”
- “What factors impact my decision about vaccinations?”

Have groups select five to six questions to investigate from the list of sample questions and any additional questions generated by the groups. Provide groups access to available resources to answer and record the answers to their selected questions, such as [Government of Canada: Diseases and Conditions](#), [Teens Meet Vaccines](#) or [Adult Immunization: What Vaccines Do You Need?](#)

Provide groups with sufficient time to gather and record their answers on their Mind Maps and have groups share their Mind Maps for other groups to reference. Have groups complete a [Gallery Walk](#) of the Mind Maps to compare and contrast the information gathered about their selected questions.

Divide students into pairs and provide each pair with a T-Chart. Using a [T-Chart](#) strategy and the information gathered on the Mind Maps, have pairs identify the pros and cons of vaccinations. Have students record any other information that they think might be useful to them to make an informed decision about vaccinations.

## Consolidation

Provide students with an Exit Card to respond to the following questions:

1. “What factors most impact your decision about vaccines? Why are these the most important factors?”
2. “Why is it important to respect other people’s choices and decisions about vaccines? How can I do this while being aware and respectful of my own decisions about vaccines?”

## Ideas for Extension

Have students use their new health knowledge to create a media product to educate others about the role vaccines play in preventing or reducing the risk of infection.

## Notes to Teachers

- This lesson is not intended to convince students that vaccination is the necessary route to optimum health. Decisions related to vaccines remain the responsibility of the parents/caregivers in the context of their family values and beliefs. Instead, it provides students with knowledge about vaccines as one way to prevent the transmission of diseases and the skills needed to participate in informed decisions about their health.
- It is important to provide opportunities for students to listen, learn and understand diverse views and understand how these may differ from their own.
- Before teaching students about healthy living topics such as vaccinations, educators should reflect on their own assumptions, prejudices, stereotypes, and biases, as part of creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. Educators should carefully consider the ways their perspectives are articulated

to their students and the ways they respond to the ideas of others. An effective way for educators to identify personal bias is through personal reflection. Consider reflecting on these questions to examine personal beliefs and identify potential bias and possible reactions towards the topic of vaccinations.

- What personal biases and beliefs shape my emotional reaction to the content?
  - What steps will I take to support my students so that my personal biases and beliefs will not interfere with my ability to respond professionally to their questions about vaccination?
  - How will I address the curriculum expectations if aspects of it challenge my personal beliefs?
  - In what ways do I demonstrate that I consider and respect the diverse values, experiences, backgrounds, and identities of my students?
  - Is the diversity of my students reflected in the scenarios, activities, and resources used in my classroom?
- Be mindful: When engaging students in learning about vaccinations, be mindful of discussions about COVID-19 in a medical context. Inequities and discrimination in the health care system in Canada have been a cause of trauma for Indigenous and Black people and communities across Canada and a deep mistrust of the health care system<sup>1,2</sup>. Additionally, students may have experienced direct or indirect loss or trauma as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach webpage for tips when engaging students in healthy living topics such as vaccinations.

## Additional Resources

- [Ophea's Vaccination Talks Resource Database](#)
- [Ophea's Vaccination Talks Discussion Guides](#)
- [Ophea and School Mental Health Ontario's Stress Management and Coping Virtual Field Trips](#)
- [Ophea's Inquiry Based Learning in Health and Physical Education Resource](#)

<sup>1</sup>Gunn, B. Ignored to Death: systemic Racism in the Canadian Healthcare System. Retrieved 26 April 2022, from: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMR...>

<sup>2</sup>Government of Canada. (2022). Social determinants and inequities in health for Black Canadians: A Snapshot. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/population-health/what-determines-health/social-determinants-inequities-black-canadians-snapshot.html>