Mature Minor Consent for COVID-19 Immunization

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

Under New Brunswick’s Medical Consent for Minors Act, minors who have reached the age of 16 can consent to health care in the same way as if they had reached the age of majority. In N.B., a parent/legal guardian needs to consent to immunization for minors younger than 16.

Like other provinces and territories across Canada, however, the capacity to make a health care decision is not tied strictly to age. There are circumstances in the Medical Consent of Minors Act that does allow for health care of a minor younger than 16 without the need for a parent/legal guardian’s consent. When the opinion of a legally qualified medical practitioner, dentist, nurse practitioner or nurse attending the minor determines that the minor is capable, consent given by a mature minor cannot be overturned by a parent or guardian.

Q: When can a minor give consent?

A minor under the age of 16 is capable of giving consent to be immunized if an attending legally qualified medical practitioner, dentist, nurse practitioner or nurse determines that the minor:

- understands the nature and the consequences of a medical treatment; and
- the medical treatment and the procedure to be used is in the best interests of the minor and the minor’s continuing health and well-being.

Q: What is the role of the parent or guardian?

Parents/Guardians have an important role in discussing treatments which affect a minor’s health and well-being. It is highly recommended that parents/legal guardians discuss COVID-19 disease and immunization with their children in a loving and caring environment. Information on the COVID-19 disease and available vaccines can be found on the Government of New-Brunswick’s COVID-19 vaccine “Get the Facts” webpage. Children need to know about:

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

When a child is sufficiently mature to be considered competent to make a medical decision and the parent/guardian refuses consent, the child can choose to be vaccinated.