

# Did you know?

Revised  
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## AGES OF CONSENT

**Many people are surprised to learn how the ages vary for different matters and don't understand why they do. But the ages for consent listed below are all the result of legislation.**

**Age of Majority:** In British Columbia the age of majority is 19 years. This age applies to private documents such as wills and contracts.

**Criminal:** A child cannot be charged criminally unless he or she is 12 years or more. If they are between the ages of 12 and 17 they can be charged under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

**Medical Treatment:** A child may consent to medical treatment without obtaining the approval of his or her parents or guardian. The child's consent is effective providing the health care worker has explained the treatment to the child and is satisfied that the child understands its nature and consequences, risks and benefits. The health care provider must determine and conclude that the health care is in the best interests of the child.

**Marriage:** A child needs parental consent to marry if he/she is under the age of 19 years. The child can apply to the BC Supreme Court to dispense with this consent if he/she feels that consent is being unreasonably withheld. The consent of the BC Supreme Court is required before a child under 16 can marry.

**Employment:** An employer must have the written permission of the Director of Employment Standards before employing a young person under 12 years of age.

**Driver's Licence:** A child cannot get a Driver's Licence without having the application signed by his parents or guardian until he reaches the age of 19 years. The only exception is if the applicant can prove to ICBC that he/she is married or self-supporting. ICBC will never grant a licence to someone under the age of sixteen.

**Adoption:** A child must consent to an adoption if he/she is 12 years of age or older.

**Alcohol and Film Viewing:** A person must be 19 years or older to consume alcohol. However, to see an adult movie a "minor" is defined as a person under the age of 18 years. Minors may not view films classified as "Restricted" or "Adult", and they may not view those labelled as "18A" unless they are accompanied by an adult.

**Sexual activity:** The legal age of capacity to understand and agree to engage in non-exploitative partnered sexual activity is 16, as long as neither partner is impaired by drugs or alcohol. There are "close in age" exceptions of 5 years' age difference for 14- and 15-year-olds and 2 years' difference for 12- and 13-year-olds.