

August 30, 2016

Dear Sir or Madam:

Health and Education have a long history of working together to ensure that children in Alberta are healthy and protected from vaccine preventable diseases. Immunization saves lives, prevents complications and is the most cost effective disease prevention program in health care.

Alberta Health has requested that Public Health in Edmonton Zone review the immunization records of all grade 1, 5 and 9 students; this change will further improve vaccine coverage rates, thus protecting Alberta students from vaccine preventable diseases. Our continued partnership between Education and Health is essential for our success.

The changes to the school based immunization program will be phased in over the next two years. Going forward it will include:

- Grade 1: Review immunization records of all grade 1 students, and offer relevant vaccines to all children who are not up to date according to Alberta Health recommendations. This is unchanged from previous years.
- Grade 5: Offer Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines for girls and boys (each consists of a series of 3 doses of vaccine spaced over at least 6 months). New for 2016/17 school year: Review all students' immunization records and offer relevant vaccines to children who are not up to date according to Alberta Health recommendations
- Grade 9: Offer Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (combined) vaccine, Meningococcal vaccine and HPV vaccine (consists of a 3 dose series spaced over at least 6 months, for students who have not yet received). Starting 2017/18 school year: Review all students' immunization records and offer relevant vaccines to children who are not up to date according to Alberta recommendations

We request your support to communicate the school immunization program changes to principals and school staff, and to highlight some of the possible impacts your school may experience:

- Offering additional immunizations may increase the amount of time our nurses will require in the schools to deliver the program in a safe and effective manner.
- Our immunization program will have to start earlier in the school year; this will ensure our students are protected earlier, and minimize the scheduling of the program during December and June, which are both busy times for schools.

- For an efficient and safe immunization program, School Health Teams will require current class list information. In September we will ask for your support in ensuring we have the most up to date client names and contact information.

Public Health Nurses are experts on vaccines and the diseases they prevent. They are also a key contact on health matters for schools and parents of students. Working in partnership with the Edmonton Zone schools, our Public Health Nurses will continue to do their utmost to meet the needs of the individual schools, while delivering the expanded immunization program in a safe, effective and efficient manner.

In addition to arming children against disease, immunizations are also important for adults. Adults need booster doses of certain vaccines throughout their lifetime, and may also need additional vaccines if they have specific health conditions, risks or are travelling out of country. We encourage all adult Albertans discuss their individual immunization needs with local Public Health.

Vaccines not only protect individuals – they also protect our communities against disease. As more people are immunized, the risk of disease for everyone is reduced. For school staff to learn more information about immunity, immunization, and how to protect themselves and their family, visit www.immunizealberta.ca or call Health Link at 811.

The routine immunization programs offered by Public Health through schools have continued to expand over the years to provide better and broader protection to Alberta students. Our continued partnership is essential for our success. Thank you for your support in helping us to deliver the best school-based immunization program possible.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Connie Berg Chabaniuk, RN, BScN, MA
Program Manager, Child & Youth Health
Public Health, Edmonton Zone
(office) 780 735-3023

cc. Chrystal Ference, RN, BN, MN
Director, Public Health Programs, Edmonton Zone

Dr. Christopher Sikora, MD, MPH, Msc CCFP FRCP(C)
Medical Officer of Health, Edmonton Zone