

Dear Parents:

Changes and Updates to the School Immunization Program

Alberta Health has made changes to the school immunization program that will take effect in the 2018/19 school year.

What is changing?

HBV and HPV vaccines

Currently in Alberta, Grade 5 students are offered three doses of vaccine for Hepatitis B (HBV) and three doses of vaccine for Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Alberta is moving from a three-dose vaccine schedule in Grade 5 to a two-dose vaccine schedule in Grade 6 for both HBV and HPV vaccines. Alberta Health has made this change to align with the evidence, which shows that administering two doses at least six months apart will provide children with good protection against Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus diseases.

The Grade 9 school immunization program including the diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (dTap) and Meningococcal (MenC-ACYW) vaccines will continue to be offered.

The HBV vaccine given in a two-dose series is approved for children 11 years up to and including 15 years of age. In Alberta, the majority of students are 11 years of age in Grade 6, therefore HBV immunizations will be offered in Grade 6 rather than Grade 5.

The HPV vaccine given in a two-dose series is approved for children 9 years up to and including 14 years of age who have a well-functioning immune system. HPV immunizations will be offered at the same time as the HBV vaccine, in Grade 6 rather than Grade 5. A three-dose series will continue to be offered to students with compromised immune systems.

Catch-up immunization program

In the 2018/19 school year, public health nurses will be reviewing the immunization records of all Alberta students from Grades 1 to 9 to assess immunization status. You will be contacted if your child is missing immunization information.

With your consent, your child can be offered the immunizations they are missing at school. You will continue to have the final decision on immunizing your child.

As per current practice, if a highly contagious vaccine-preventable disease, such as measles, occurs at school, children with missing immunization information or declined immunization may be excluded from school to protect their health. In some cases, children may need to stay home for several weeks.

Below is an outline of the changes that will occur to the school immunization program in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 school years.

2018/2019 School Year

Students in Grade 5 will not be immunized with the HPV and HBV vaccines, as they will be offered the vaccines the following year in Grade 6.

With your consent, children in Grades 1 to 9 who are missing immunizations will be offered immunizations at school.

2019/2020 School Year

Students in Grade 6 will be offered immunization with the HPV and HBV vaccines as a two-dose series.

With your consent, children in Grades 1 to 9 who are missing immunizations will be offered immunizations at school.

Alberta Health Services, Public Health will work closely with the schools and school authorities to ensure that immunization does not interfere with students taking the Provincial Achievement Tests.

More information on immunization and Alberta's routine immunization schedule and changes to the school immunization program is available at www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/immunization.html

If you have any questions about immunizing your child, please contact your school's public health nurse, call 811 or visit <http://immunizealberta.ca/>.

Sincerely,

Alberta Health Services