



SPRING NEWSLETTER

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IEI MISSION STATEMENT:

The **Immunization Education Initiative** (IEI) is a national group of nurses partnering with other immunization supporters, who educate about the importance of immunization to enhance the health of Canadians.



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PAGE 2 Reporting adverse reactions

PAGE 3 National Immunization Awareness Week

PAGE 4 Immunizations for college and university students



UPDATE ON H1N1 VACCINE AND INFECTION:

By December 2009, Health Canada distributed over 23 million adjuvanted H1N1 doses and over 1.2 million nonadjuvanted doses. This is enough to cover over 80% of the Canadian population.

By January 27, 2010, approximately 45% of Canadians received the H1N1 vaccine.

As of February 13, 2010, there have been 8615 of hospitalized cases of H1N1 and 427 deaths due to H1N1 flu virus since the pandemic. In fact, since 2010 started, there have been 6 or less deaths per week. The fall peak saw about 30 deaths per week.

January marked the end of the second wave of H1N1 flu activity in Canada. This means all influenza activity is within or below the expected range for a normal flu season, with a significant drop in H1N1 infection, hospitalization, and deaths. However, the government continues to encourage every Canadian to get vaccinated against H1N1 because the unpredictable virus could still cause a third wave of infection. They also encourage vaccination against seasonal flu shot because of the possibility of a seasonal flu outbreak.



SPRING NEWSLETTER

REPORTING ADVERSE REACTIONS

An adverse reaction, or side effect, is an unintended and noxious effect to a health product, including prescription drugs, non-prescription drugs, natural health products, and vaccines. These reactions can occur under recommended or normal use of the health product.

Adverse reaction reporting is mandatory for manufacturers and distributors. Reporting an adverse reaction is voluntary for the general public. However, Health Canada encourages anyone, including patients, consumers, health care providers, and caregivers, to report any suspected adverse reaction to a drug or health product on the Canadian market.

Anyone can report an adverse reaction to a drug and other health product to Health Canada, through the Canada Vigilance Program. This program collects and analyzes adverse reaction reports due to drugs and a variety of health products.

However, for vaccines, patients and the general public should report any adverse reaction to their vaccine provider or health care professional. Health care professionals should report any adverse reaction after immunization to their local health unit.

Adverse reactions for vaccines are monitored through a program specifically for vaccines, the Canadian Adverse Events Following Immunization Surveillance System (CAEFISS). The Public Health Agency of Canada collects the adverse reaction reports from provincial and territorial health departments, health care professionals, and the pharmaceutical industry. These reports are stored in the Canadian Adverse Events Following Immunization (CAEFI) database, which is maintained by CAEFISS. The CAEFISS is a national voluntary reporting system that ensures safety of vaccines marketed in Canada but continuing to monitor adverse reactions after immunization with vaccines.

When reporting an adverse reaction, you do not have to provide a definitive association between a vaccine and an adverse reaction. The majority of adverse reaction reports are suspected adverse reactions. Health Canada wants to know about all suspected adverse reactions to vaccines, but especially if they are:

- ▶ unexpected (i.e., it's not mentioned in the vaccine's labelling), regardless of how severe it is; or
- ▶ serious, whether expected or not; or
- ▶ requires urgent medical attention

Why report an adverse reaction to a vaccine?

Health Canada does not allow a vaccine, drug, or any other health product to be marketed and available to patients until the product has passed specific safety standards. Since all vaccines and health products are associated with specific benefits and risks, careful testing and analyses are conducted before a product is licensed in Canada. However, some adverse reactions may become apparent only after the general population has started using a product.

Health Canada, through CAEFISS, continues to ensure the safety of a vaccine by collecting information that occurs once health products are on the market. An adverse reaction report contributes to this ongoing surveillance of product safety.

Reporting adverse reactions may help by:

- ▶ identifying previously unrecognized rare, or serious adverse reactions
- ▶ contributing to changes in product safety information or regulatory actions, such as withdrawing a product from the Canadian market
- ▶ providing data internationally about the benefits, risks, or effectiveness of vaccines and health products
- ▶ supplying further health product safety information that benefits all Canadians

How to report an adverse reaction to a vaccine

Health care professionals should report any adverse reaction experienced by a patient after vaccination by completing the Adverse Events following Immunization (AEFI) form. A copy of the form can be found [here](#).

The completed forms should be sent to the provincial/territorial local health unit.

Patients and the general public should report any adverse reaction after vaccination to their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. Their health care professional will complete the AEFI form and send to the provincial/territorial local health unit.

To learn more about adverse event report, visit [MedEffect Canada](#). Read more about CAEFISS [here](#).



SPRING NEWSLETTER

VACCINE TRUTHS

- ▶ Adverse reactions that are serious are rare. In general, the benefits of immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases greatly outweigh the risks of a serious adverse reaction to the vaccine.
- ▶ Side effects from vaccines exist, but are mostly minor. The most common side effects of many routine immunizations are redness, swelling, and pain at the injection site, and sometimes fever.
- ▶ Responses to vaccines are continually monitored to allow researchers to improve vaccines. For example, the oral polio vaccine first used in the 1950s caused a rare adverse reaction, a form of paralysis once in every 3 million doses. A vaccine that uses inactivated polio virus is now used and cannot cause this reaction at all.

IMMUNIZATION – DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ In the United States and United Kingdom, there is an increased risk of meningococcal disease among first-year university students living in dormitories. Although this hasn't been seen in Canada, people in this age group do have a higher rate of meningococcal disease. Therefore, the meningococcal C conjugate vaccine is recommended for all young adults.
- ▶ The influenza vaccine cannot give you the flu. The vaccine contains dead influenza viruses and cannot cause flu infection.
- ▶ CAEFISS is not the only vaccine safety monitoring system in Canada. IMPACT (the Immunization Monitoring Program-Active) is a network of paediatric teaching hospitals that collects information on serious adverse reactions following immunization in children.

NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION AWARENESS WEEK (APRIL 24–MAY 1, 2010)

National Immunization Awareness Week is held annually to help raise awareness of the importance of immunization for Canadians of all ages. Immunization awareness is a worldwide affair. That same week is also Vaccination Week in the Americas, National Infant Immunization Week in the United States, and European Immunization Week.

The Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion (CCIAP) will be communicating the immunization message on a national level. CCIAP also looks for community-based support to reach Canadians at the local level. CCIAP wants to encourage health care providers, parents, and caregivers to ensure that the immunization message reaches children and adults of all ages.

If you are a health care provider or a member of the public interested in helping with National Immunization Awareness Week, contact the CCIAP to find out what you can do in your community.

You can help community-based programs through contacting local media, government, businesses, schools, service agencies, service clubs, and faith communities. Developing and distributing education materials or organizing local events and media campaigns will also help raise immunization awareness.

Some ideas for activities include:

- ▶ putting up posters in high-traffic areas such as libraries and bus shelters
- ▶ setting up information booths at shopping malls or putting up posters in store windows
- ▶ having local health professionals make presentations at schools, churches, and other community groups
- ▶ health professionals working with businesses can promote immunization to employees (e.g., through a “lunch-and-learn”)
- ▶ visiting prenatal classes to provide parents-to-be with information on immunization
- ▶ working with service clubs and faith organizations to hold fundraisers or promotional events to raise immunization awareness
- ▶ proclaim National Immunization Awareness Week in your community by sending out a proclamation to your mayor or local health official

The CCIAP offers many resources to support community events for National Immunization Awareness Week. To learn more about how you can get involved, visit the CCIAP website at <http://www.immunize.cpha.ca/en/events/niaw.aspx>.



IMMUNIZATIONS FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Childhood vaccinations are an important in maintaining health against preventable diseases. As children get older and reach adulthood, they need to continue getting the vaccinations as set out in the recommended immunization schedule. Continued immunization is needed because:

1. the immunity provided by some childhood and infant vaccines wears off
2. as we get older, especially during the teenage and late-teenage years, there is a risk for more diseases
3. not everyone may have received all recommended vaccinations during infancy and childhood, and not everyone may have received them on time

Having up-to-date immunizations is especially important for college and university students because infectious diseases can quickly and easily spread at school and among those living in close quarters, such as dormitories and residency houses.

By the time adolescents and young adults attend college and university, they should have received or be scheduled to receive the following immunizations:

- ▶ diphtheria, tetanus, acellular pertussis (Tdap) – given once in adulthood
- ▶ diphtheria, tetanus (Td) – given every 10 years
- ▶ inactivated poliovirus
- ▶ measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
- ▶ varicella (chickenpox)
- ▶ hepatitis B
- ▶ pneumococcal conjugate
- ▶ meningococcal-C conjugate
- ▶ human papillomavirus (HPV)
- ▶ influenza vaccine – given every year

Depending on how up-to-date childhood vaccinations were, these vaccinations may be given as part of a regular immunization schedule or a catch-up immunization schedule (for people with incomplete immunization records).

It's best to check with your health care provider if you have received all recommended vaccinations or if you are almost due for a vaccination. Don't assume that you have received all recommended immunizations from the past. College and university students should keep an up-to-date immunization record and bring a copy with them to school if they are going to be away from home.

IMMUNIZATION NEWS

The United Kingdom's National Autistic Society has issued a position statement which states: "We recognize that the weight of epidemiological evidence indicates that there is no statistically significant link between the MMR vaccine and autism."

Visit <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1914&a=17709> to view the position statement.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A NURSE SPEAKER?

Contact the IEI for more information!

Don't forget to visit the IEI website at www.immunizationeducation.ca!

To stay informed on immunization news, bookmark or make www.immunizationeducation.ca your home page.

IEI Nurse Speakers are available to provide education sessions for your group or organization of health care professionals.

There are several presentations to choose from: *Administration Techniques*, *Communication Strategies*, *Immunology/Vaccinology*, *Immunization Overview*, and *Influenza*.

Each session takes about 1½ hours and light refreshments are provided.

Best of all, there is no cost to your group!

For further information or to book a presentation, please visit our website at www.immunizationeducation.ca.