

November 2015

Public Health Update

School-Age Immunization Program

In order to help students receive the routine BC Immunization Schedule, Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) will be holding immunization clinics in the school setting for kindergarten, grade 6 and grade 9 students. In addition to routine vaccines for each age group, we will also offer catch up vaccines to students that missed a vaccine at a younger age. Kindergarten clinics will be held in the spring alongside the second grade 6 clinics if there is an identified need; however, we strongly recommend current kindergarten students be immunized upon entry to school or soon after. Throughout the school year VCH is also holding weekly booked and drop-in in clinics for any children ages 2 months – 19 years. Please call 604-983-6700 for more information.

Recent changes to the publicly funded program include the following:

- The Ministry of Health has announced a new **HPV vaccine program** available for males who are at increased risk of HPV infection including boys and young men from 9-26 who are gay or who may be questioning their sexual identity. As heterosexual boys are likely to be protected through routine immunization of girls, this program aims to protect boys who remain otherwise unprotected. More information can be found at:
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile101b.stm>
- **Hepatitis A vaccine** is funded for all Aboriginal persons 6 months to 18 years of age. 2 doses are recommended 6 months apart.

If you think your child is eligible for either of these vaccines, please contact the school's public health nurse who can make arrangements to immunize at a location that is most comfortable (public health unit, youth clinic or a school immunization clinic).

It is important to keep your child's records up-to-date. Always obtain and keep a record of any vaccination given. This is especially important if:

- There is a disease outbreak
- You are travelling to other provinces or countries
- When applying to Colleges or Universities

Please submit your child's record **if requested** from VCH public health by:

- Leaving it at the school office
- Faxing
- Online

https://www.vch.ca/media/VCH_Self_Reporting_Immunizations_Online_Form_August_2014.pdf

If you are not sure if you have submitted your child's immunization record or have any questions, please call the Public Health Nurse on call at 604-983-6714.

Influenza Season

Flu season is upon us. Although flu vaccine is recommended for everybody, individuals under age 5 and over 65, pregnant women and those with certain chronic health conditions are at high risk for influenza infection and complications. All of these high risk groups are eligible for free flu vaccine, including those who interact regularly with these high risk groups.

This year's flu shot will give you protection against three strains of influenza viruses specified by the World Health Organization: A/California/7/2009 (h1N1)pdm09-like virus, A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (h3N2)-like virus, B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (Yamagata lineage).

Children will also be protected against a fourth strain - B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus. Help fight the flu and protect those around you by getting a flu shot available now through public health, physicians, and pharmacists.

For more information please visit: www.immunizeBC.ca

Additional recommended vaccines that require purchase

There are other excellent vaccines recommended by public health and paediatric experts. You can buy these at most travel clinics or at a pharmacy with a doctor's prescription. Some are available through public health clinics. Many private drug benefit plans also cover vaccines; please check your plan for details.

- HPV vaccine for heterosexual boys. While vaccine is not funded yet for these young men, to ensure protection, we recommend that you purchase the vaccine.
- Meningococcal vaccine that protects against the B strain (Bexsero®) as the public health program offers a vaccine that protects against only one strain (Men C).
- Meningococcal vaccine that protects against four strains (Men A, C, Y, W-135).
- You should receive travel vaccines for most destinations outside Canada, the USA, and Western Europe. Please contact a Travel Clinic for more information if you will be travelling.

Wishing you and your families a safe and healthy school year.

Sincerely,



Mark Lysyshyn, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer, North Shore
Vancouver Coastal Health