

September 2014

To: **Superintendents of Schools**

Re: Expansion of Alberta's Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Immunization Program

The Alberta Ministry of Health has announced the expansion of the human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization program from grade five girls only to also include males in grade 5 beginning in September 2014. In addition, HPV immunization for grade nine boys will start in the 2014-2015 school year and continue for four years to June 2018. This immunization initiative will lead to a significant long term reduction in HPV-related cancers in both males and females.

Expanding the HPV program to males will save lives, reduce disease and decrease future health care costs in Alberta. Recent data from Alberta shows that almost 100% of oropharyngeal head and neck cancers in men under 40 years of age are HPV-related.

Medical experts have recommended implementation of school-based HPV immunization programs across Canada. School-based immunization generally results in higher numbers of students completing the immunization and being protected from HPV disease. HPV immunization is voluntary and the signed consent of a parent or guardian is required before the immunization can occur at the school.

Is there anything that can help parents make a decision?

In support of the HPV immunization program, Alberta Health Services has developed an interactive, online resource to provide parents with the information to make an informed HPV immunization decision for their child. The HPV Vaccination Decision Tool contains important information about HPV disease, the HPV vaccine, and the benefits and risks associated with the HPV vaccine. The decision tool is available at: <http://albertapreventscancer.ca/resource/hpv-and-hpv-vaccine>. As well, information for the public is available on ImmunizeAlberta.ca at immunizealberta.ca/i-need-know-more/diseases-covered/hpv-human-papillomavirus.

Alberta Health Services or First Nations Inuit Health Branch Public Health will be sharing or have already shared this information with school principals in your jurisdictions via a similar letter from Medical Officers of Health or through the Public Health Nurses assigned to their schools.



Thank you for your anticipated cooperation and assistance in making this new immunization program a success. If you have any questions about the HPV immunization program, please contact your local Medical Officer of Health.

Sincerely,

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