

ADVISORY: Changes to the Immunization Requirements For School Attendance



April 22, 2014

On September 18, 2013, regulatory amendments were made under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act* (ISPA) to improve the health and safety of Ontario's school children. Among these amendments were updates to the immunization requirements for school attendance, which will become effective on July 1, 2014, in time for the 2014/15 school year. The amendments that become effective on July 1, 2014 include:

- Meningococcal disease, pertussis, and varicella have been added as designated diseases under the ISPA. Parents are required to provide proof of their child's immunization against these diseases for school attendance, unless a valid statement of exemption is provided. (Note: Varicella immunization is only a requirement for children born in 2010 or later.)
- The number of doses and intervals for vaccines corresponding to the existing six designated diseases (tetanus, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, and rubella) have been updated to align with the current publicly funded immunization schedule.
- The forms for the statement of medical exemption, the statement of conscience or religious belief, and the notice of transfer from a school have been updated and reformatted. They are no longer embedded in the regulation itself, and instead are available as PDF forms by searching the name of the form on the Government of Ontario's central online forms repository at <http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca>

The meningococcal conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine for adolescents will continue to be administered primarily through routine school-based immunization clinics to grade 7 students. Students in grades 8 to 12 who declined to receive this vaccine when they were in grade 7 will be required to receive a publicly funded catch-up dose to meet the updated immunization requirements for school attendance. Catch-up doses of this vaccine should be available through the school-based program or community catch-up immunization clinics.

Information on the new requirements for proof of immunization will be sent to parents by public health units either directly or through their child's school. Information is also available on the ministry's website at: <http://www.ontario.ca/vaccines>. Parents who have not provided the required immunization records to their public health unit will receive notification from the health unit.

You may be contacted by parents to verify that their children meet the immunization requirements for school attendance, or to catch up on required immunizations they may have missed. Please refer to Ontario's immunization schedule at www.pcchu.ca | [For Professionals](#) | [Health Professionals](#) | [Vaccines](#) and found under [Patient Resources](#).

If the child has been immunized against the designated diseases with all doses appropriate for his/her age according to Ontario's immunization schedule, the child will meet the immunization requirements for school attendance. Please remind parents to provide their child's immunization records to their public health unit. You may also be contacted by parents requesting records of previous immunizations so that they can be provided to their public health unit. Please note that the provision of an immunization record is included as part of the insured service for immunization and cannot be billed to a client.

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The statement of medical exemption form is available from the public health unit or on the Ontario government's online forms repository at <http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca>. Exemptions due to medical contraindication can be provided for any reason determined by the health care provider, and can either be permanent or limited to a specified period of time. Evidence of immunity against measles, mumps, or rubella requires laboratory confirmation of immunity or infection. Evidence of immunity against varicella (chickenpox) requires either: diagnosis or verification of a history of varicella by a health care provider; or laboratory confirmation of immunity or infection.

Parents can obtain a statement of conscience or religious belief affidavit form from their public health unit or on the Ontario government's online forms repository at <http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca> in July. A statement of conscience or religious belief must be sworn before a commissioner for taking affidavits in and for the courts in Ontario. Parents should contact their public health unit for more information.

Most of the vaccines required for school attendance are routinely administered by health care providers and can be ordered as per existing processes for ordering publicly funded vaccines. One exception is the meningococcal ACYW-135 vaccine for adolescents. In Ontario, this vaccine is routinely provided to students in grade 7 through school-based immunization clinics. Students who are currently in grades 8 to 12 who declined to receive the meningococcal ACYW-135 vaccine when they were in grade 7 will be required to receive a publicly funded catch-up dose to meet the updated immunization requirements for school attendance. More details on catch-up clinics will be provided at a later date.

Further information, including Ontario's publicly funded immunization schedule, is available on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's website for health care professionals at www.pcchu.ca | [For Professionals](#) | [Health Professionals](#) | [Vaccines](#) and found under [Patient Resources](#).

If you have further questions, please contact:

Vaccine Preventable Disease Program Nurses at
705-743-1000, ext. 139.