

Immunizations

Q&A

Who is responsible for immunizations at schools?

Parents are responsible for notifying Public Health Services when their child receives an immunization so that their record is complete.

Public Health is responsible for screening vaccine records and notifying parents when they are not up-to-date on their immunizations. This process occurs between the ages of 7 and 17 years.

Who notifies Public Health if a child is vaccinated?

Parents are responsible for notifying Public Health Services when their child receives an immunization so that their record is updated.

How do parents report their vaccinations to Public Health?

Parents must report the date of all of their child's vaccines to public health at 905-540-5250. Before calling, parents must have:

- Their child's health card number
- Dates their child received vaccines

What is a vaccine record?

To be in compliance, students 1) be up to date on vaccines and report the vaccines to Public Health or 2) report a valid medical exemption to Public Health, or 3) -have a completed statement of conscientious objection on file with Public Health.

How do schools support Public Health regarding immunizations?

Schools support Public Health by promoting immunizations, allowing Public Health to enter schools to provide immunizations in grade 7 and keeping students out of school when Public Health issues a suspension order due to non-compliance with vaccine legislation.

Do students have to be vaccinated?

By law ([Immunization of School Pupils Act](#)), children must have some vaccines before going to daycare or school in Canada. Children must be immunized for the following diseases:

- Diphtheria
- Measles
- Meningococcal
- Mumps
- Pertussis
- Polio

- Rubella
- Tetanus
- Varicella

What is the process for vaccinating children?

Most immunizations are provided by primary health care providers (i.e. family doctors). Parents are then responsible for reporting their child's immunizations to Public Health. Public Health also provides immunizations to grade 7 students that include hepatitis B, HPV and meningococcal.

Who can be exempted from the vaccinations?

Some students may not be vaccinated for medical reasons. For those students, parents will need their doctor to fill out a statement of Medical Exemption Form and provide it to Public Health.

Parents with strong beliefs against vaccines can complete forms to let Public Health know their child will not get the vaccines. Forms must be notarized by a commissioner or notary public.

Both forms are available through Public Health at <http://bit.ly/2hRskCZ>.

What is the exemption rate in Hamilton?

Parents can choose to opt out of one or more multiple vaccines. In Hamilton, the number of medical and conscientious exemptions on file is between two and three per cent, which is consistent with the rest of the province.

How does Public Health communicate information on vaccinations to parents?

Public Health works closely with primary care providers and school boards in communicating information to parents about the law related to vaccinations.

This year, HWDSB took the lead in developing communications in partnership with Public Health. HWDSB supported Public Health's communication efforts by creating two postcards, posting on school websites, sending home automated voice messages and posting on social media; HWDSB also supported public health messaging by sharing a vaccine reporting video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FY6DFVlaGzA>.

Efforts were targeted at children born in 2000 and 2002.

Elementary: <http://bit.ly/2h2vENi>

Secondary: <http://bit.ly/2h3wppn>

How are newcomers informed about vaccinations?

Newcomers are immunized by their primary healthcare providers and follow the same process as Canadian-born students.

Parents are responsible for reporting vaccine records to Public Health Services. As Public Health reviews and identifies incomplete vaccine records parents and students are notified.

What does it mean if a school falls below a 95 per cent immunization rate?

All Hamilton school students and staff should keep their immunizations up to date according to Ontario's Publicly-funded Immunization schedule. This will provide the best protection for you as well as those at home or in the community who might not be able to be immunized (for example: some people receiving cancer treatments or very young babies).

Are schools that fall below a 95 per cent immunization rate safe?

It is safe for students to attend schools in Hamilton. Should an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease occur at a school, students or staff not immune to the disease may be excluded from school.

Does Public Health have any plans to provide booster shots to high school students?

Students and staff needing to update their immunizations should see their primary health care provider (family doctor). Those without a family doctor can also access vaccines through walk in clinics. Parents/students should remember to report these vaccines to Public Health by providing a copy of your child's yellow immunization card or a record from their doctor by:

- **Fax:** 905-546-4841
- **Mail:** City of Hamilton, Public Health Services, Vaccine Program, P.O. Box 897, Hamilton, Ontario, L8N 3P6
- **Phone:** 905-540-5250 - have your child's vaccine dates and health card number ready

PHS continues to provide hepatitis B, HPV and meningococcal vaccines to grade 7 students.

More information: www.hamilton.ca/vaccines