

## Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
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[www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca)



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Grade Seven Students to Receive a More Effective Meningococcal Vaccine This School Year

## *Health Unit Gears Up to Provide Three Vaccination Clinics to Protect Adolescent Students*

Thursday, September 3, 2009, Peterborough

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU) announced today that local grade seven students will receive a more effective vaccine this school year to protect them against developing one type of meningitis and its complications.

For the first time, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care will provide the vaccine Menactra® to all grade seven students in Ontario, free of charge. It meets the requirements of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) for a booster dose and provides broader protection against three additional types of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) as compared to the previous vaccine that one protected against only one type.

"It is vital that all grade seven students receive this vaccine so they are well protected against meningococcal disease," explained Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health with the PCCHU. "While the number of cases in Canada has declined to less than 80 per year thanks to vaccinations programs in Ontario and other jurisdictions, the disease is still fatal in 8 to 15% of cases, so we want to ensure our local youth build their immunity against it."

While meningococcal C vaccine, introduced by the province in 2004, was having an impact on reducing the incidence of disease in children under five, there were still cases in people over the age of 16. To address this potentially waning immunity, and to enhance the immune memory response, the NACI now recommends that adolescents be immunized with a meningococcal vaccine. Based on this advisement, Ontario is implementing routine immunization for adolescents with Menactra®.

The Menactra® vaccine is one of three vaccines that will be offered to adolescent students this year. Other vaccination clinics planned for the 2009-2010 school year include Hepatitis B for all grade seven students and Human papillomavirus (HPV) for grade eight girls. All three vaccines will be offered in the fall.

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Hepatitis B is caused by virus that affects the liver and can cause permanent damage. There are around 150 cases of hepatitis B reported in Ontario each year. The vaccine that can prevent hepatitis B is considered one of the safest vaccines in Canada. Hepatitis B is transmitted through the blood and other body fluids from an infected person, and it is possible that people can get the virus and not have any symptoms. That means they can infect someone else without knowing, therefore, getting immunized is critical.

HPV is a common virus with more than 100 types. Depending on the type of HPV infection, the infected individual may develop cervical abnormalities, cervical cancer, other genital cancers or genital warts. Most HPV infections can be prevented with a vaccine. The vaccine offered to grade eight girls can prevent infection against four types – type 6, 11, 16 and 18. In Canada, strains 16 and 18 cause 70% of cervical cancer. Strains 6 and 11 cause about 90% of genital warts.

Dr. Pellizzari advised parents to watch for the vaccine program consent forms when they are sent home with their grade seven students and grade eight girls in September. While the vaccine is voluntary, it is highly recommended by the Medical Officer of Health that all eligible students get immunized. The vaccines will be administered by public health nurses in scheduled school clinics. A Registered Nurse will be holding information sessions in schools for students in grades seven and eight in September, and a listing of vaccination clinic dates and times will soon be posted on [www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca).

Information about upcoming seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccine clinics available to all residents will also be posted soon on [www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca).

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