BE WELL INFORMED - THE DECISION TO IMMUNIZE YOUR CHILD IS AN IMPORTANT ONE

Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health strongly recommends immunization as a safe and effective way to protect yourself, your family and your community from vaccine-preventable diseases.

We encourage you to make an informed decision, and to know the risks and responsibilities as a parent when choosing not to immunize your child. If you are choosing not to immunize your child, please keep the following in mind:

- You may be putting your child at risk of serious illness or possibly death from diseases that could be prevented by vaccines
- If your child gets sick and needs medical attention, it is important to tell health care providers that they have not been immunized
- Your child may be unable to attend school/daycare if there is an outbreak or threatened outbreak of disease within the community
- Your child may unknowingly expose other children and/or adults that cannot be immunized for medical reasons to highly contagious diseases
- Summer camps, volunteer work, or certain college/university programs may require your child to have an up-to-date immunization record for enrolment
- If planning to travel outside of Canada, you put your child at a higher risk of getting dangerous diseases that are very contagious – these diseases are only a plane ride away

Should you change your mind in the future, your child may still receive their complete series of immunizations. You may call Public Health at any time to cancel your exemption and report immunizations given (1-800-265-7293 ext 4396).

Please review the following information on vaccine preventable diseases that require an exemption form to be completed as stated in the Immunization of School Pupils Act, 1990 (ISPA). You may choose to exempt your child from any or all of the diseases as listed on the back of this page. You may indicate your choices on the Vaccine Exemption Form found in this package.

Speak with your healthcare provider or Public Health if you have any questions.

What is tetanus?

Tetanus (lockjaw) is a serious disease caused by bacteria found in dirt, dust, and soil. It enters the body through a wound, cut, or scratch. Symptoms include severe muscle spasms, and cramping or locking of the jaw. Complications of tetanus can include painful convulsions, difficulty breathing and swallowing, and death. Even with early treatment, tetanus kills two out of every 10 people who get the disease.

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease caused by bacteria of the nose, throat, and skin. It's spread to others through coughing and sneezing. Symptoms include sore throat, fever, and chills. Complications of diphtheria can include breathing problems, heart failure, nerve damage, and death. Diphtheria kills one out of every 10 people who get the disease.

What is pertussis?

Pertussis (whooping cough) is a serious disease caused by bacteria that spread easily from an infected person through coughing, sneezing, or direct contact. Symptoms include severe coughing spells that can last for weeks. Pertussis can affect people of any age, but is most dangerous for babies as coughing fits makes it hard for them to eat, drink, and breathe. Complications of pertussis can include pneumonia, brain damage, and death. Pertussis kills one to three infants every year in Canada. Adolescents and adults are often the source of infection for infants and young children.

What is polio?

Polio is a serious disease caused by the poliovirus that is spread through contaminated drinking water or food. It can also be spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Symptoms can include fever, headache, fatigue, muscle aches and pains, nausea, and vomiting, however there are often none. Complications of polio can include difficulty breathing, muscle paralysis, and death. There is no cure for polio but it can be prevented through immunization.

What is measles (rubeola)?

Measles is a respiratory illness caused by a highly infectious virus that spreads easily through the air from an infected person through coughing, sneezing, and direct contact. Symptoms can include fever, cough, runny nose, red watery eyes that are sensitive to light, small white spots on the inside of the mouth, and red rash. Complications of measles can include lung infection (pneumonia), swelling/inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), middle ear infections, seizures, convulsions, and death. Pregnant women who are infected with measles can have premature delivery and miscarriages. Measles kills one to two people out of every 1000 cases.

What is mumps?

Mumps is an infection caused by a virus that spreads easily from an infected person through coughing, sneezing, and direct contact. Symptoms include fever, headache, and swollen, painful glands under the jaw. Complications of mumps

can include a serious infection of the fluid and lining that covers the brain and spinal cord (meningitis), and deafness. About one in four men have painful swelling of the testicles, and one in 20 women have swelling of the ovaries.

What is rubella (german measles)?

Rubella is a highly infectious virus that spreads easily from an infected person through coughing, sneezing, and direct contact. Symptoms include mild fever, sore throat, swollen glands in the neck, pain and swelling in the joints, and a rash. Complications of rubella primarily affect pregnant women causing miscarriages or birth defects such as blindness, deafness, and brain damage.

What is varicella (chickenpox)?

Chickenpox is a disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It is very contagious and spreads easily through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, or through direct contact with the fluid in the chickenpox blister. Symptoms can include fever, headache, sore throat, fatigue, rash and/or fluid-filled blisters which can be very itchy. Most children who get chickenpox recover in a week. Complications of chickenpox can include bacterial skin infections, dehydration, lung infections (pneumonia), swelling/inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), and death. Birth defects may occur if a baby gets chickenpox from the mother before being born.

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria that spread through coughing, sneezing and direct contact with an infected person. This includes kissing and sharing eating utensils or water bottles. Some people carry the bacteria in their nose or throat without getting sick, but can still pass it on to others. Symptoms of invasive meningococcal disease include; fever, rash, intense headache, nausea, vomiting, and stiff neck. Complications can include; long term hearing loss, mental impairments, and limb amputations. Meningococcal disease kills one out of 100 people infected.

Where can I learn more about the vaccine?

- Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Visit: www.wdgpublichealth.ca
- Canadian Paediatric Society:
- www.caringforkids.cps.ca
- Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion:
- www.immunize.ca
- Public Health Agency of Canada:
- www.publichealth.gc.ca