

## **The Grade 7 Immunization Program**

### ***A summary of the “must-know” facts for hepatitis B and meningitis C***

#### **Informed Consent**

For students to give informed consent to the hepatitis B and meningitis C immunizations, they need to work through the following process:

1. **Understand** that the vaccines protect them against hepatitis B and meningitis C
2. **Consider** the benefits and risks of immunization
  - Benefits – prevents them from getting these diseases and spreading them to other people
  - Risks – mild side effects, e.g. a small red area at the injection site that may be tender for 24 to 48 hours
3. **Evaluate** if these vaccines are good for them
4. **Decide** if they will be vaccinated

A brief summary for each disease is presented below. York Region Health Services has also prepared a curriculum matched teaching resource that contains more detailed information about each disease, blackline masters and learning activities. This more comprehensive document (entitled “The Immunization Program for Grade Seven Students”) is available on your school board’s website, along with a PowerPoint presentation of the key points to assist in educating students about these immunizations.

---

#### **Hepatitis B**

Hepatitis B is a serious infection of the liver for which there is no cure. There are about 150 new cases each year in Ontario, mostly in young adults. For every 100 people who get hepatitis B, about 90 will eventually recover. The remaining people are likely to become lifelong carriers of the hepatitis B virus and continue to be capable of infecting others. They are also at risk of developing permanent liver damage, cirrhosis (scarring of the liver), or liver cancer. Of these 10 people, one person may die.

**Symptoms:** Half of people who become infected with hepatitis B do not develop symptoms. Other people may develop fever, headache, joint pain, tiredness, tenderness in the upper abdomen and jaundice. Symptoms can develop 45 to 160 days after exposure to the virus, and last up to 3 months.

**Transmission:** The virus that causes hepatitis B lives in the blood and body fluids (semen, vaginal secretions, saliva and breastmilk) of a person who has hepatitis B. It can also live in dried blood on surfaces outside the body for up to 7 days at 25°C. The virus spreads during unprotected sex with a person who carries the virus and also through using items that could have someone else's blood on them.

**Prevention:** To be protected against hepatitis B, get the hepatitis B vaccine, practice abstinence or safer sex, do not use items that could have someone else's blood on them and do not touch other people's blood, even if it looks dry.

---

## **Meningitis C**

Meningitis C disease is a serious but uncommon illness that can result in meningitis (infection of the tissues around the brain or spinal cord) or meningococemia (an infection of the blood). It is caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*, of which there are several types. Type C is one of the more common and deadly strains. In Ontario, most cases of meningitis C disease occur in adolescents and young adults. Infection may result in hearing loss, kidney problems, amputations of limbs, or death. For every 100 cases, 5 to 15 people will die, even with treatment.

**Symptoms:** Meningitis C infection typically starts with a sudden onset of fever/chills, severe headache, stiff or sore neck, nausea and vomiting, body aches, sensitivity to light and sometimes a rash.

**Transmission:** The meningitis C bacteria live in an infected person's saliva and nose and throat secretions, and can be spread for up to 7 days before he/she becomes ill. The bacteria can spread through sneezing, coughing, kissing or by using items that have been in contact with an infected person's mouth.

**Prevention:** Get immunized with the meningitis C vaccine, understand how meningitis C spreads, avoid exposure to other people's saliva and respiratory secretions and wash your hands often.

For more information about the hepatitis B and meningitis C immunizations,  
please call *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653.