



IMMUNIZATION REGISTRIES

The Issue

Public health authorities across Canada are working to develop a national network of immunization registries. These registries will help protect your family and community from the threat of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Background

It is not unusual for people to get the vaccines they need from various health care providers. For example, you or your child may get one vaccine from your doctor, and then be vaccinated for something else at a community clinic or hospital. Or, you may change health care providers as a result of moving from one region to another. You may not have a central record of the vaccines your family members have received, and when.

This can create problems. For instance, your child may not be allowed to attend school without proof of immunization. Or, if there is an outbreak of infectious disease, your current health care provider may not have the information needed to assess whether your family is at risk.

Immunization registries address these problems, and provide other benefits.

How Immunization Registries Work

An immunization registry is an electronic record of the vaccines you've been given, and when. Each time a health care provider gives you a vaccine, he or

she would send the details to an electronic registry kept by public health authorities. The records would be confidential, and the only people with access to your immunization history would be public health authorities, your health care provider(s), and you or your guardian.

Immunization registries will also track reports of adverse events associated with vaccines. This will help to monitor their safety and will assist health professionals with immunization decisions.

Immunization registries are already in place in some regions of Canada.

The Benefits of Immunization Registries

Immunization registries provide benefits for individuals, the community and the health care system. For example:

- Immunization schedules are becoming very complex. An electronic registry that can be easily accessed is a way to ensure that your family gets the right shots at the right time.
- Immunization registries can generate reminders when it is time to update your vaccinations, and can provide proof of immunization for school or travel purposes.
- Immunization registries will reduce the number of times a vaccine is given as a precaution, when it is not known if it has been given already.

This, in turn, will reduce immunization costs.

- Public health professionals will use the data from immunization registries for program planning. With registries to help manage inventories, it may be possible to introduce universal programs for some of the newer vaccines that are beneficial, but costly.
- By keeping track of who is immunized in Canada, public health officials can identify populations at risk and target education, and early intervention, when appropriate.
- Some parents decline routine immunization for their children, and some people can't have vaccines due to allergies or other conditions. If there is an outbreak of infectious disease, immunization registries provide a way of advising such people that they or their children are at risk and should take extra precautions.

An integrated, national network of immunization registries would bring additional benefits, by allowing the easy transfer of records (with your consent) to another region if you move within Canada. This would give your current health care provider access to information about your immunization history, when needed. In addition, a network of immunization registries will enhance the national surveillance of the vaccine-preventable diseases, and adverse reactions to vaccines.

Addressing Concerns about Privacy

The Canadian Immunization Registry Network is aware of the need to protect the privacy of information collected and stored electronically. The provinces and territories are making every effort to address concerns about privacy through legislation, and strict security policies and procedures.

Health Canada's Role

Health Canada is providing leadership and support to all provinces and territories to help build immunization registries in Canada. This includes participation in the Canadian Immunization Registry Network (CIRN). The goal of the CIRN is to establish an integrated and comprehensive immunization records system in all provinces and territories. The registries are being designed as a population-based database, and immunization records will be used as the basis for Electronic Health Records.

Minimize Your Risks

The development of immunization registries does not replace the need for you and your health care provider to maintain up-to-date information about your immunization status. To reduce your risks of getting vaccine-preventable diseases, keep your immunizations current and an accurate record at home in a safe place.

Need more Info?

For general information about immunization, visit the following Web sites:

Health Canada's Division of Immunization

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/dird-dimr/index.html>

The Canadian Immunization Awareness Program

<http://www.immunize.cpha.ca/>

Other Web sites of interest include the following:

Australian Childhood Immunization Registry

<http://www1.hic.gov.au/general/acircirgacir>

National Immunization Program, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, USA

<http://www.cdc.gov/nip/registry/Default.htm>