
BACKGROUND

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Ministry of Health Services

INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND IMMUNIZATION FACTS

Varicella

There are 47,500 reported cases of chicken pox (varicella) in B.C. each year. Shingles (zoster), a latent form of the chicken pox infection, occurs in up to 10,000 people each year. Two-thirds of hospitalisations and 80 per cent of these cases occur in children under 10 years of age.

The expanded program will be implemented in stages. The kindergarten and grade 6 programs began this school year and the infant program will begin in January 2005.

Meningococcal C

The risk for meningococcal disease is highest among children younger than one year of age and then declines and peaks again among those aged 15 to 19 years. A vaccination at two and four months will protect vulnerable infants.

An immunization program targeting Grade 9 children will provide protection before the age of higher risk is reached. Approximately 52,500 Grade 9 students are eligible for meningococcal vaccination.

The program for Grade 9 children will be implemented this school year and the infant program will be implemented in 2006.

Influenza

Recent data show that many young children are hospitalized for influenza. An estimated 75,000 B.C. children aged six to 23 months are eligible for the influenza vaccine. This program will be implemented beginning this school year.

The B.C. government also provides free seasonal influenza vaccines around October every year to seniors, health-care workers, adults and children with chronic illnesses, informal caregivers of those at high-risk, home-care workers, doctors and their staff, emergency responders including paramedics, firefighters and police and other health-care providers and facility staff. To find out if you are eligible, contact your local public health unit or family doctor.

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