

Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy

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What is Vaccine Hesitancy?

- Reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines
- Identified as a top 10 threat to global health by the World Health Organization
- 20% of Canadian parents are vaccine hesitant and are unsure about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines

- Complex and multi-factorial
- 3 C's model
 - Lack of **confidence** in vaccine safety/effectiveness
 - 70% of parents concerned about side effects
 - 38% believe vaccines cause disease
 - **Inconvenience** in accessing vaccines
 - **Complacency**
 - perceived risks of disease are low
 - vaccination not thought to be necessary

Toronto Public Health role in promoting vaccination

Work with the public:

- Explain what vaccinations are needed by children and adults
- Provide vaccines in community settings, including to those who do not have health coverage
- Answer questions about vaccines from the public and health care providers

Work with schools and child care centres

- Provide vaccines in schools (HPV/HBV/Meningitis)
- Assess immunization records of students and children attending licensed child care centres to ensure high coverage rates

Work with health care providers

- Provide education/support so they are ready to answer questions from parents
- Ensure they have publicly funded vaccines available

- TPH monitors vaccination rates in students:
 - The Toronto Star reported that MMR vaccination rate for 7 year olds is 76% in Toronto.
 - Reasons for lower rate among 7 year olds include delays in: notifying public health of the vaccines, getting newcomers caught up with their vaccines and reviewing translated vaccine records
 - The rate improves for 8 year olds to 88% for all vaccines and for 9 year olds to 90%.
 - The MMR rate among the entire Toronto student cohort (7 to 17 year olds) is high at 89%.
 - Only 1.7% have a philosophical or religious exemption – something that TPH monitors closely

Addressing vaccine hesitancy and improving vaccination rates

- Multiple strategies needed to counter underlying beliefs that lead to vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccine uptake/acceptance
 - Respond to misinformation
 - Provide clear and truthful messages supporting vaccines
 - Enable health care providers to address parental concerns

Addressing vaccine hesitancy and improving vaccination rates

- Province-wide, real-time electronic vaccine registry that contains reports of vaccines administered by doctors at the time of vaccination
- Continue to work with parents, schools and health care providers to achieve national 90 to 95% vaccination targets

What more can be done?

- Health Canada could explore ways of restricting misleading and false information about vaccines
- Health care professional associations can educate members on how to respond to vaccine hesitant parents
- Ask the WHO to address vaccine hesitancy misinformation similar to its work on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco
- TPH to develop a comprehensive multi-pronged strategy to address vaccine hesitancy that includes support for local health care providers and measures to mitigate the negative impact of false advertising