

Ontario Expands Immunization Program

May 5, 2011

Ontario is further protecting the health of its population by enhancing its publicly funded immunization program, while saving families more money. Starting August 2011, the province is adding two new vaccines to its immunization schedule – one to protect against rotavirus and a combined measles-mumps-rubella-varicella (MMRV) vaccine. Ontario is also expanding the availability of two other vaccines (varicella and pertussis).

Rotavirus Vaccine

Rotavirus is a virus that causes severe diarrhea, vomiting and dehydration among infants and children in the world. In Canada, 36 per cent of children with rotavirus see a doctor, 15 per cent go to hospital ERs and seven per cent require hospitalization.

Ontario is the first jurisdiction in Canada to make the rotavirus vaccine publicly funded after the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommended its use for infants in July 2010.

The vaccine will be given to infants. It comes in liquid form and will be administered by mouth.

Varicella Vaccine

Chicken pox is a highly contagious illness caused by primary infection with the varicella zoster virus. It usually starts with a skin rash mainly on the body and head and becomes itchy pockmarks – which mostly heal without scarring.

Children currently receive one dose of the varicella vaccine at 15 months. NACI recently recommended that two doses of the vaccine be provided for maximum protection.

Ontario will now provide two doses of the varicella vaccine:

- The first dose to children aged 15 months; plus
- The second dose via the MMRV (combined measles-mumps-rubella-varicella) vaccine at 4 to 6 years; or
- The second dose at 18 months (health care providers, in consultation with parents, may recommend that a child be vaccinated with MMR and varicella vaccines separately).

Pertussis Vaccine

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a highly contagious bacterial disease. Symptoms are initially mild, and then develop into severe coughing fits which produce the high-pitched “whoop” sound in children when they inhale air after coughing.

Most people get vaccinated against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap vaccine) in early childhood (at ages two, four, six and 18 months as well as 4 to 6 years old). A booster shot – which provides lifetime protection for pertussis – is offered when the child reaches 14-16 years, but its uptake rate is low. This has caused more cases of pertussis among adults who, in turn,

spread the infection to infants and children. There have been recent outbreaks of pertussis in Ontario and other parts of North America.

Ontario is now offering an additional dose of Tdap vaccine on a one-time basis for adults, 19-64 years old, who did not receive their Tdap booster in their teen years. In particular, young adults, who may have young children, are being targeted.

Routine Vaccines Available in Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Program

Before 2003 - 9 Vaccines		Today - 14 Vaccines	
DTaP- IPV	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio	DTaP-IPV	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio
DTaP-IPV - Hib	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and <i>haemophilus influenzae</i> type b	Rotavirus	Rotavirus
IPV (Polio)	Polio	DTaP-IPV- Hib	Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and <i>haemophilus influenzae</i> type b
MMR	Measles, mumps and rubella	MMR	Measles, mumps and rubella
Hep B	Hepatitis B	Hep B	Hepatitis B
Tdap	Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis	Tdap	Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis
Td	Tetanus and diphtheria	Td	Tetanus and diphtheria
Pneumovax 23	Invasive pneumococcal disease	Pneumovax 23	Invasive pneumococcal disease
Influenza	Influenza	Influenza	Influenza
		Men-C	Invasive meningococcal disease
		Varicella	Chicken pox
		Prevnar 13	Invasive pneumococcal disease
		HPV	Human papillomavirus
		Men-C-ACYW	Invasive meningococcal disease

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