



News Release/ Communiqué

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ONTARIO REACHES MILESTONE: 1.2 MILLION KIDS IMMUNIZED *Taking Action To Keep Children Healthy With New Free Vaccines*

TORONTO — Children and youth across Ontario are on the road to better health thanks to free immunizations that are helping to prevent illness and promote wellness, announced Premier Dalton McGuinty.

“The responsibility to keep our kids healthy is one we all share,” said Premier McGuinty. “By immunizing more children against more preventable diseases, we’re improving the health of Ontario families for years to come.”

Since coming to office, the McGuinty government has worked hard to protect children’s health. Three new publicly funded vaccinations for chicken pox, meningococcal meningitis and pneumococcal disease have been introduced. So far, about 1.2 million children and youth have been vaccinated. This has saved Ontario families approximately up to \$600 per child.

The government is also helping to prevent illness by increasing the number of rare diseases newborns are screened for — from two to 27. Early detection means that children can be treated sooner, which helps reduce the chance of serious health problems later in life. The Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario is now home to the most comprehensive newborn screening program in Canada.

“We are ensuring children in Ontario have the best possible start in life,” said George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. “Ontario is now a leader in protecting children’s health and we are already seeing the positive effects.”

“The three new vaccines have helped to strengthen an already effective public vaccination program in Ontario,” said Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. “Protecting the health of children by vaccinating them against preventable diseases is an essential component of our mandate to keep Ontarians healthy.”

Immunizations and newborn screening programs are just the latest examples of how the McGuinty government is working on the side of families who want the best health care. Other initiatives include:

- Creating 150 Family Health Teams, made up of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, to improve access to health care for 2.5 million Ontarians
- Funding 657,000 additional medical procedures in five key areas to ensure faster access to health care in communities
- Giving every Ontarian the right to be free from second-hand smoke with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which bans smoking public spaces and workplaces.

“One of our top priorities is to ensure that all children and youth in Ontario have every opportunity to reach their full potential,” said Premier McGuinty. “By promoting better health and encouraging healthier lifestyles, we’re helping our kids succeed — today and in the future.”

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