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Website arms parents with knowledge, kids against disease

CALGARY – It's Immunization Awareness Week and Alberta Health Services (AHS) is encouraging parents to learn more about arming their children against disease.

Immunizealberta.ca — a website developed for Alberta parents, together with Alberta parents — was launched last September and has already provided more than 118,900 people with information and support, as they consider immunization for their children.

With answers just a few clicks away, this website simplifies the search for credible immunization information in the crowded online environment.

“We know parents have questions and that’s more than OK: it’s healthy,” says Dr. Gerry Predy, Senior Medical Officer of Health with AHS. “You want to keep your children safe and so do we. That’s why we’ve taken your common questions, concerns and information requests, and put together a simple website that you can trust.”

Since its launch, immunizealberta.ca has remained a go-to information source for questions about vaccine safety, immunization and immunity, and has also seen many visits related to emerging topics and events.

“We’re pleased to see the activity on the site mirror the information needs of Albertans,” says Dr. Predy. “When we declared a pertussis outbreak in AHS Central Zone in December, the pertussis pages on immunizealberta.ca were the top pages visited for three weeks straight. Similarly, in late January and through February, when the measles outbreak in the U.S., including Disneyland, was a hot topic, pages about measles and getting immunized before spring travel were the top ranked.”

In addition to helping parents find information they need, the website has also proven valuable for public health nurses, who are on the front line interacting with parents at routine appointments. The feedback from both parents and these health care providers continues to influence the website content.

“Front-line providers have told us that the Common Questions pages on the website are incredibly valuable and, for some questions that they hear more than others, they expressed interest in printable versions of those questions and answers,” says Dr. Predy. “As of today, we’ve added the printable Q&A option to the top eight questions on the site now, and more printable options will continue to be added.”

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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