

**Date:** Wednesday, January 02, 2019

**To:** Central Zone Family, Pediatric, Obstetrics/ Gynecology, Internal Medicine, and Emergency Department Physicians

**From:** Dr. Ifeoma Achebe , Medical Officer of Health – Central Zone

**Subject:** Immunization Program Updates

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Dear Physicians:

The following are updates to the provincial Alberta immunization program for information and attention.

### **School Immunization Program – Hepatitis B (HBV) and Human Papillomavirus 9-valent Vaccines (HPV):**

HBV and HPV vaccine two dose schedules are licensed for use in Canada. Two doses of HBV or HPV given at least six months apart has been shown to be efficacious and immunogenic. A number of jurisdictions in Canada have already adopted two dose schedules for both HPV and HBV.

Beginning September 1, 2019, Alberta's HBV and HPV school immunization program will change from a three-dose schedule administered in Grade 5 to a two-dose schedule administered in Grade 6.

The HBV two-dose schedule (1.0 mL per dose) is licensed for administration to adolescents 11 years up to and including 15 years of age. Individuals less than 11 years of age, and those 16 years of age and older must still be offered a three-dose HBV schedule.

The HPV two-dose schedule is licensed for administration to immunocompetent adolescents 9 years up to and including 14 years of age. Individuals 15 years of age and older; immunocompromised individuals or HIV-infected individuals must still be offered a three-dose HPV schedule.

### **Maternal dTap in Pregnancy:**

Beginning January 1, 2019 diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (dTap) immunization will be available to women during every pregnancy. The immunization should ideally be administered between 27 and 32 weeks of gestation, but may be provided at any time after 13 weeks of gestation. The rationale for the practice change is as follows:

- Infants less than 2 months of age are at highest risk for pertussis complications.
- dTap in pregnancy protects infants until they receive a pertussis-containing vaccine at two months of age.
- The vaccine has been shown to be safe in pregnancy.

Provincially funded dTap vaccine for pregnant women will be available through Alberta Health Services (AHS) Public Health and participating Community Pharmacies and Physician Clinics. A prescription from an eligible prescriber is required prior to accessing vaccine at a pharmacy. A call ahead to confirm that a pharmacy has dTap vaccine in stock is recommended. In other jurisdictions dTap, is referred to as Tdap.

**Public Health Act and Immunization Regulation:**

Alberta Public Health Act amendments were made in 2016 specific to how vaccines are to be provided to Albertans. A supporting Immunization Regulation was approved on October 18, 2018 and is now posted at the following link [http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2018\\_182.pdf](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2018_182.pdf). The Immunization Regulation requires the following:

- Assessment and Immunization Reporting – effective January 2021, all health practitioners who provide immunizations must report and submit electronically to the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health information on immunization assessment, immunization administration, and past unreported immunizations.
- Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) Reporting - any health practitioner who becomes aware of an AEFI must report the event to a central AEFI team at AHS. Further information will be forthcoming.
- Maintenance of Vaccine Viability – persons who handle, transport or store vaccines must follow policy, standards and protocols developed to ensure vaccine safety and effectiveness.

**Additional References:**

- [Alberta Health Immunization Policy website](#)
- [Alberta Health Services. Immunization Program Standards Manual](#)
- NACI. [Update on immunization in pregnancy with tetanus toxoid, reduced diphtheria toxoid and reduced acellular pertussis \(Tdap\) vaccine](#)

**Please contact the Medical Officer of Health at [MOH.Central@ahs.ca](mailto:MOH.Central@ahs.ca) if you have further questions. Thank you**

This advisory has been posted on the Central Zone MOH webpage [AHS-MOH webpage](#)