



Standard for Immunization of Post-Secondary Health Care Students and Students in Other High-Risk Occupational Programs

Section 8 :	Immunization of Specific Populations	Standard #: 08.302
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Preamble

AHS Province-wide Immunization Program Standards and Quality, Population and Public Health Division provides Public Health and other partners who administer provincially funded vaccines with ongoing and timely information relating to province-wide immunization program standards and quality. These standards are based on currently available evidence based information, Alberta Health (AH) policy, and provincial and national guidelines. Immunizers must be knowledgeable about the specific vaccines they administer.

Background

There are several specific groups of adults for whom certain vaccines are recommended because of the presence of risk factors for disease. Post-secondary health care students are one such group. Students in other high-risk occupational programs such as animal health are also at risk.

All adults are eligible to receive immunization to protect them against tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella and annual influenza as part of the routine immunization program in Alberta. Post-secondary educational programs are strongly encouraged as the opportunity presents, to protect **ALL** their students from these vaccine preventable diseases. In addition to routine vaccines, other vaccines are recommended for post-secondary students in high-risk occupational programs (e.g. health care, animal health, equine science, wildlife and animal research).

For special circumstances such as immunization needed for wound management/post exposure follow-up, during an outbreak, or for those who have unique needs based on individuals risk factors, (e.g. medical condition, lifestyle, pregnancy) standards specific to the situation should be referred to for recommendations regarding immunization.

Contact with clients/patients or material from individuals with both diagnosed and non-diagnosed infection places post-secondary health care students at risk of exposure to vaccine preventable diseases. Exposure to animals infected with rabies puts students in animal health related programs at risk of infection. Maintenance of immunity through immunization is therefore an important preventative and infection control strategy which safeguards post-secondary students and protects clients/patients.

There are certain vaccines that are recommended for adults based on their age or other individual risk factors (e.g., medical conditions or life style) but not because of occupational risk of exposure. These vaccines are NOT addressed in this Provincial Immunization Standard; the expectation would be that if these individual risk factors were identified in a post-secondary student, the student would be referred to Public Health or their physician for further assessment.

Province-wide immunization program standards for health care students are consistent with immunization standards for health care workers. Health care students seeking placements in AHS facilities require the same immunization/evidence of immunity that is required of health care workers in those facilities, and may be refused placements if they are not compliant with these requirements.

AHS Population and Public Health will work with post-secondary institutions to provide consistent immunization recommendations for all post-secondary students in high-risk occupational programs based on a risk assessment. AHS Population and Public Health or Zone Public Health is responsible for distributing, monitoring and promoting the use of vaccines supplied by AH for occupational health purposes. This includes information related to storage and handling of vaccines, eligibility criteria, guidelines for assessment of history of immunization and/or evidence of immunity of health care students and the documentation of vaccines administered.

The accountability for ensuring occupationally high-risk post-secondary students are fully immunized according to the ***Immunization Recommended of Health Care Students and Others in High-risk Occupational Programs Chart*** falls to the post-secondary institution, however, health and safety in the workplace is a co-operative effort between the student and the post-secondary institution.

The best time for post-secondary institutions to review immunization status and provide recommended immunizations for post-secondary students in high-risk occupational programs is on entrance/enrollment into a post-secondary occupationally related program.

Purpose

The purpose of this Standard is to provide principles and guidelines for the consistent assessment and immunization of post-secondary students in specific high-risk occupational programs including health care, animal health, equine science, wildlife and animal research.

Applicability

This standard applies to post secondary students in specific high-risk occupational programs including health care, animal health, equine science, wildlife and animal research. It will be used for assessing and making recommendations regarding immunizations for post-secondary students who are residents of Alberta or students who will be attending post secondary programs in Alberta. The accountability for ensuring health care students placed in AHS facilities are fully immunized as outlined in the ***Immunization Recommended of Health Care Students and Others in High-risk Occupational Programs Chart*** falls to the post secondary institution.

Competency

In November 2008 the Public Health Agency of Canada published the Immunization Competencies for Health Professionals with a goal of promoting safe and competent practices for immunization providers. The following competencies outlined in that document are applicable to this standard:

- Communication - Communicates effectively about immunization, as relevant to the practice setting(s).
- Populations Requiring Special Considerations - Recognizes and responds to the unique immunization needs of certain population groups.

Definitions

Health care worker (HCW) as defined by Alberta Health (AH): Includes all hospital employees, other staff who work or study in hospitals (e.g., **students in health care disciplines**, volunteers and contract workers) and other health care personnel (e.g., those working in clinical laboratories, nursing homes, home care agencies and community settings), who are at risk of exposure to communicable diseases because of their contact with individuals or material from individuals with infections both diagnosed and undiagnosed.

See specific information in **Immunization Recommended for Health Care Students and Students in Other High-Risk Occupational Programs** and the **Tuberculin Skin Test for Health Care Workers and Post-Secondary Students in Health Care Programs** regarding definition of HCW for Tuberculosis Skin Testing.

Community setting: Includes locations where health care workers (including students in health care disciplines) may assess and provide care to clients including, but not limited to, clients' homes, physician or public health clinics, long term care facilities, lodges, retirement homes and/or schools.

High-risk occupational programs: Include those programs with post secondary students enrolled in health care as well as students in animal health (including research), equine science and wildlife programs who are at risk of exposure to communicable diseases because of their contact with people and/or animals or material from people and/or animals with infections both diagnosed and undiagnosed.

Adequate Date: Written records containing a minimum of a year and month are considered adequate.

Inadequate immunization documentation: No written documentation of immunization, illegible documentation OR written immunization records that have less than a month and year as the date and / or incomplete vaccine information.

General Statement:

Students accepted into specific post secondary high-risk occupational programs including health care related, animal health, equine science, wildlife and animal research programs are eligible for publicly funded vaccines based on guidelines and criteria established by AH. **Eligibility for immunization is based on the student's work related activities or potential work related activities that put them at occupational risk of infection.**

Section 1: Responsibility of the Post-Secondary Institution

It is the responsibility of the post-secondary institution to:

- Assess the immunization status of each health care student and students in other high-risk occupational programs at the time of initial enrollment.
- Obtain full immunization history including documentation of the doses received and adequate dates of administration for all routine immunizations and other vaccines received.
- Offer immunization at the earliest opportunity to health care students and students in other high-risk occupational programs with inadequate documentation or without evidence of adequate immunity where applicable (e.g., hepatitis B, varicella, rabies vaccine).
- Maintain records of all immunizations and serologic tests.
- Institute an immunization recall system when necessary.

AH provides vaccines recommended for occupational health reasons at no charge. To ensure all health care students and students in other high-risk occupational programs are fully immunized before leaving post secondary programs, AHS encourages post-secondary institutions to have a student health services program that includes the provision of appropriate occupational vaccines during the student's training and studies. When this is not possible, AHS will work with post- secondary programs to provide assessment and immunization in a variety of ways depending on the location and the resources available.

If a post-secondary institution does not have an occupational health or student health services program, it is reasonable for an outside provider to charge fees to the educational program / institution for the provision of the services required to assess and immunize the student including assessment of immunization history and status, referral and review of lab results if applicable, administration of vaccines indicated and recommendation for follow up serology if necessary. Fees cannot be charged for the cost of provincially funded vaccines. The *Communicable Diseases Regulation, Alberta Regulation 238/1985: Section 2.1(4)* legislates that the individual student cannot be charged for the vaccine.

Section 2: Responsibility of the Health Care Student and Students in Other High-Risk Programs

It is the responsibility of the health care student and students in other high-risk occupational programs to:

- Initiate and follow through with the assessment of their immunization status with their occupational health or student health services program.
 - Provide their post-secondary institution a full immunization history including documentation of the vaccine doses received and dates of administration.
- Follow through with recommended immunizations to ensure adequate protection against vaccine preventable diseases.
- Maintain their immunization record(s) as a part of their personal health care information.

Health care students and students in other high risk occupational programs are accountable to provide this documentation to their post-secondary institution and may need to refer to this information over the years, as part of their ongoing health status.

Immunizations Recommended for Health Care Students and Students in Other High-risk Occupational Programs outlines vaccines routinely recommended as related to occupational risk for health care students and students in other high-risk occupational programs. Special vaccines needed during exceptional circumstances or vaccines that are recommended for adults based on age or other individual risk factors are not addressed in this standard.

References:

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3. National Advisory Committee on Immunization. (2012). *Canadian immunization guide (Evergreen Edition)*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cig-gci/>
4. British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (January 2010). *Immunization Program Section III-Immunization of Special Populations, Section VII-Biological Products*. In Communicable disease control manual. <http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/comm-manual/CDManualChap2.htm>.
5. Ministry of Health (2007). *Canadian Tuberculosis Standards (6th ed)*. Ottawa ON: Tuberculosis Prevention and Control, Public Health Agency of Canada, The Canadian Lung Association. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tbpc-latb/pubs/tbstand07-eng.php>.
6. CDC. *Immunization of Health-Care Personnel: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)*. MMWR 2011;60(7):1-46. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6007.pdf>.
7. Province of Alberta, Public Health Act, Communicable Diseases (CD) Regulation, Alberta Regulation 238/1985.
8. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2008, November). *Immunization Competencies for Health Professionals*. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/ic-ci/index-eng.php>