

## **To the Parents of Secondary 3 Students**

### **Object: School vaccination program**

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In Québec, the legal age for consent to health care is 14. Your child can therefore consent to the vaccination offered at school himself/herself. The information below is provided to help you assist your child.

### **HPV vaccine**

HPV stands for “human papillomavirus.” HPVs are the most common viruses in the world, and there are over 100 types that can infect various parts of the body.

One can be infected by more than one HPV at the same time, and more than once in a lifetime. HPVs are the cause of almost all cervical cancers. HPVs can also cause condylomas, also known as anal or genital warts. Anyone who has sexual relations can be infected with an HPV, even without penetration. HPVs are transmitted through skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity, even without penetration. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI).

The main goal of the HPV vaccination program is to prevent cervical cancer and other HPV-associated diseases. To ensure maximum protection, the vaccine should be administered before girls become sexually active. The free HPV vaccination offered in Elementary Grade 4 helps to better reach girls and vaccinate them before they become sexually active. The vaccine is safe and extremely effective.

Since the free vaccination program began in 2008, girls in Elementary Grade 4 have been offered two doses of the vaccine 6 months apart, and girls in Secondary 3 have been offered three doses at 0, 2, and 6 months. Starting in the 2013–2014 school year, the HPV vaccination for girls beginning Secondary 3 will be offered only to those who did not receive two doses of the vaccine in Elementary Grade 4. After evaluating the scientific data, Québec experts have deemed that two doses administered in Grade 4 are sufficient to protect girls against HPVs.

This vaccination will not be offered to boys. When the program began, the vaccine was solely intended to prevent cervical cancer and thus only girls were given the vaccine. Since then, many scientific studies have shown that the vaccine also protects boys against condylomas and a form of cancer of the anus associated with HPVs. We don't yet know if vaccinating males prevents cervical cancer in their female partners. However, vaccinating a large portion of the female population results in fewer cases of condylomas for males. Canadian experts do recommend vaccinating boys against HPVs, but this is not offered free of charge in the majority of provinces, including Québec.

About 80% of eligible Elementary Grade 4 and Secondary 3 girls have agreed to be vaccinated against HPVs since the program was launched in 2008.

You will find information on HPVs and the HPV vaccine at the following addresses:

Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux: <http://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/conseils-et-prevention/vaccin-contre-les-infections-par-les-virus-du-papillome-humain-vph/>

Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/std-mts/faq-eng.php>

Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada: <http://www.hpvinfos.ca/>

**Diphtheria, whooping cough, and tetanus vaccine, meningococcal C conjugate vaccine, and vaccination record update**

In fall 2004, Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux initiated a whooping cough vaccination program in schools for boys and girls in Secondary 3. Your child will have the opportunity to receive a dose of the TdaP vaccine, which protects against diphtheria (d), tetanus (T), and pertussis or whooping cough (aP). Diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough are very serious diseases caused by bacteria, which is why it's important to vaccinate children. Even if your child has been vaccinated against diphtheria and tetanus in the past five years (e.g., following an injury or animal bite or before travel), the TdaP vaccine is recommended for protecting him/her against whooping cough.

Meningococcus is a bacteria that can cause severe infections such as meningitis and blood poisoning (septicemia). A dose of the meningococcal C conjugate (Men-C) vaccine at age 12 months is part of the vaccination schedule. To maintain the individual and group protection (herd immunity) that the vaccine provides, Québec experts recommend administering an additional dose of the Men-C vaccine to children in Secondary 3.

The TdaP, Men-C, and any missing vaccinations will be available to boys and girls in Secondary 3. For girls who were not vaccinated in Elementary Grade 4, the first dose of the HPV vaccine will be administered at the same time as the DTaP and Men-C vaccines. The second and third doses of the HPV vaccine will be administered 2 and 6 months after the first dose respectively. There is no risk in receiving several vaccines in one session. This is a safe method that is practiced around the world.

When your child is vaccinated, the nurse will take the opportunity to check his/her vaccination record to see whether he/she has received all doses of diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles, rubella (German measles), mumps, chickenpox<sup>1</sup>, hepatitis B, and HPV (girls only) vaccines indicated for his/her age. The nurse may also give your child any missing vaccinations so that he/she is fully protected against these diseases, which still exist. However, the nurse will still be able to offer your child the recommended vaccinations even without his/her vaccination record.

For more information on vaccinations and diseases that can be prevented through vaccination, please visit the MSSS website at: <http://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/conseils-et-prevention/vaccination/>

Your child will receive an information leaflet on the side effects that may appear within 24 to 72 hours of being vaccinated and what to do to alleviate them.

The vaccination at Lester B Person will be:

VACCINES		DATE OF VACCINATION
Boys and girls	TDaP, Men-C-C, and missing vaccines	December 11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> 2017

**Please ensure your child brings his/her vaccination record/booklet so that the vaccinations administered can be entered into it.** A health insurance card is not required.

If you would like more information, please contact Maria Di Matteo RN, B. Sc. N (school nurse) at 514 384-2000, ext.:7292 or go to [www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/vaccination].

Thank you for your cooperation.

Maria Di Matteo RN, B.Sc. Inf.

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<sup>1</sup> If your child had chickenpox after age 1, he/she is considered protected. To ensure the vaccination presents no difficulties, you are recommended to inform your child whether he/she has had chickenpox. The vaccine has been available free of charge since January 2006.