

Immunizations up from 34 to 99%

Teens? Check. Health department now to target 7-year-olds

BY LISA QUEEN
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Two thirds of 17-year-old York Region students were at risk of being suspended for failing to be properly immunized, but have finished off the

school year with the proper shots, medical officer of health Dr. Karim Kurji says.

Watch out, seven-year-olds, you're next.

When the region checked in January, 8,900 of more than 13,000 17-year-old students in the region were either

missing immunizations or had out-of-date records, putting them at risk of being suspended from school.

That works out to a 34-per-cent compliance rate.

Worried the students would head off to post-secondary school and the workforce without the proper immunizations, the region sent out reminder letters and held 54 extra immunization clinics on evenings and weekends.

By the end of the school year, more than 99 per cent of the students had complied with Ontario legislation requiring parents to provide proof of their children's immunization status against nine vaccine-preventable diseases unless they are exempted for medical, religious or conscience reasons.

The province requires school-aged children to be vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), varicella (chickenpox), polio,

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measles, mumps, rubella and meningococcal meningitis.

"We need to think about vaccinations as a health investment for the present and the future," Kurji said in a statement.

"Immunization is the most effective way to protect individuals and the community from vaccine-preventable diseases like measles, mumps and meningococcal meningitis — now and for

years to come."

This fall, public health's focus will shift to seven-year-old students to ensure they have the proper shots.

In May, the province introduced legislation that would require parents seeking non-medical immunization exemptions to take a lesson on the benefits of vaccinations through public health.

The new law would also require health-care providers to tell public health units which shots have been given to children, which would help reduce the number of students being suspended from school for out-of-date immunization records.

York parents can report immunization information online at eimmunization.york.ca, by faxing documents to 1-866-258-2026 or by calling York Region public health at 1-877-464-9675, ext. 73456.

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17-year-old students in York were missing immunizations or had out-of-date records



i Appointments for community immunization clinics can be made at york.ca/immunizations

\$3.6M for Southlake radiation treatment unit

The province is helping Southlake pay for a radiation treatment unit that has been in operation since winter.

Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced \$3.6 million in funding for the Southlake Regional Health Centre's Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, money that will help cover the cost of the \$4.2 million radiation unit that opened in February. It became the fourth treatment unit for the hospital and more than 400 additional cancer patients will be able to utilize the technology each year.

"They can be more accurate, do it faster and more safely," he said. "They can make it as comfortable as possible. It's really fantastic. This is the fourth such machine and we might not be finished yet. We have no doubt that, as the population continues to grow, we need to make sure we're able to provide this high quality service as close to home as possible. This is an important investment."

— Chris Simon and Adam Martin-Robbins

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