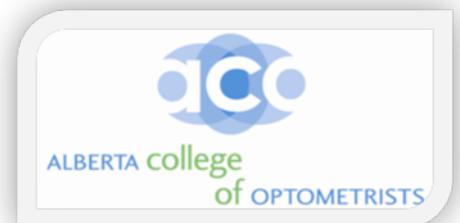




ACO IMMUNIZATION POLICY

Effective March 1, 2015



Alberta College of Optometrists

Immunization Policy

The objective of this policy is to:

- Provide clinical, evidence-based guidance to Doctors of Optometry on appropriate immunizations.
- Protect the health of Albertans by ensuring that Doctors of Optometry and their staff are properly and appropriately immunized.

Immunization is one of the most important advances in public health and is estimated to have saved more lives in Canada over the past 50 years than any other health intervention, drug or procedure. The objectives of all immunization programs are to prevent, control, eliminate or eradicate vaccine-preventable diseases. Since the viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine preventable diseases still exist in our world today, optometrists, as primary health care practitioners, may be exposed to a variety of communicable infections and/or diseases. As such, appropriate vaccinations for optometrists and their staff is one of the most important health care preventative strategies that can be adopted.

Vaccines work by stimulating, strengthening and training the immune system to defend rapidly against vaccine-preventable infections and diseases before illness can occur. They are extremely safe and not linked to other conditions such as autism, multiple sclerosis, asthma or sudden infant death syndrome.

Immunizations directly protect individuals who receive vaccinations, prevent the spread of disease in communities and indirectly protect:

- Infants who are too young to be vaccinated,
- Individuals who cannot receive a live virus (such as immunosuppressed people), and,
- The very elderly who may not respond to immunizations.

Unvaccinated individuals have a much greater chance of getting a vaccine-preventable infection or disease than people who have been vaccinated. In addition, vaccine-preventable infections and diseases reappear quickly if immunization rates and coverage drops.

We wish to acknowledge Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services and the Public Health Agency of Canada for their previously published Immunization Policies and Guidelines used in the development of this CPG.

Goal

It is the goal of every optometrist and their staff to:

- 1. Be familiar with the ACO Immunization Policy, which supports the existing AHS Immunization Program, in order to reduce or prevent the acquisition and/or transmission of vaccine-preventable infections or diseases in optometric offices.**

General Guideline

1. All optometrists and staff are strongly encouraged to participate in the Alberta Health Services Immunization Programs for Health Care Workers.

Specific Guidelines

1. All optometrists and staff are strongly encouraged to receive immunizations for:
 - Influenza (yearly)
 - Tetanus (every 10 years)
 - Diphtheria (every 10 years)
 - Pertussis (once during adulthood)
 - Measles (anyone who has not been vaccinated)
 - Mumps (anyone who has not been vaccinated)
 - Rubella (anyone who has not been vaccinated)
 - Varicella (anyone who has not been vaccinated)
2. Due to the possibility of exposure to other infections, diseases, blood or other bodily fluids, all optometrists and staff are strongly encouraged to receive additional immunizations for:
 - Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B
 - Polio (all laboratory workers)
 - Meningococcal (all laboratory workers and all others with sickle cell disease, those living in communal residences or those whose spleen has been removed)
 - Typhoid (all laboratory workers)
 - Tuberculosis
3. Supplementary (but not mandatory) immunizations include:
 - Herpes Zoster (over the age of 60)
 - Human Papillomavirus (over the age of 9)
 - Pneumococcal (all adults over the age of 65 and all others with a chronic disease, alcoholism, cochlear implant, organ or bone transplant, cerebrospinal fluid leak, spleen has been removed or on any treatment that may affect the immune system)

References

1. Alberta Health Services. Immunization Program Standards. <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/10802.asp>
2. Alberta Health Services. Immunizations Recommended for Health Care Workers. HCW chart: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/cdc/if-hp-cdc-ipsm-imm-recommnd-hcw-appdx-a-08-301.pdf>
3. Public Health Agency of Canada. Immunization Competencies for Health Professionals. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/ic-ci/index-eng.php>
4. Alberta Health (2011-12), Public Health Notifiable Disease Management Guidelines. Edmonton, Alberta. <http://www.health.alberta.ca/professionals/notifiable-diseases-guide.html>