



# Childhood Immunization

## ...It's the Law

Most parents know about childhood immunization. They can probably remember taking their newborn to the doctor at the tender age of two months for the first of what seemed like many "baby needles." What most parents don't know is that immunization of school children is the law.

In 1982 the "Immunization of School Pupils Act" became law. This Act states that all children going to school must be vaccinated and up-to-date with their vaccinations against eight diseases. These diseases are:

- Diphtheria
- Measles
- Mumps
- Polio
- Rubella
- Tetanus
- Meningococcal
- Varicella

The enforcement of this Act falls to local health units. There are only two exceptions to the Act. Children can be exempted from receiving immunization if there is a medical reason. This requires a statement of medical exemption signed by a doctor. Children can also be exempted from immunization if there is a religious or conscientious objection. These exemptions require a signed affidavit. Children with exemptions are immediately excluded from school should there be an outbreak of one of the communicable diseases noted in the Act.

The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit is in charge of collecting immunization information for every school child in the area and for ensuring that all children are up-to-date with their shots.

**The only source the Health Unit has for collecting this information is parents.** Many parents think that doctors' offices forward this information to the Health Unit. This is not true. Unless parents contact the Health Unit when their school-age child receives a vaccination, the child's records will not be accurate.

Please keep your child's immunization information up to date. Each time your child receives a vaccine you can update the record online by clicking the "online Immunization reporting" button at [www.hnhu.org](http://www.hnhu.org) under "Immunization". OR, you can mail a copy of his/her immunization record to a Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit location (see addresses below). OR, you may fax it to 519-426-9246. OR you may also call a member of the Vaccine Preventable Diseases Program at 519-426-6170.

When our records show a child is not up-to-date with his or her immunization, the Immunization of School Pupils Act states we must order the school to suspend that student from attending classes for 20 days or until the required information is provided to the Health Unit. Keeping your child home from school can be very disruptive for families, so it is vital that the student's record at the Health Unit remains up-to-date.

With our combined efforts, we can make your child's school years happy and healthy.

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#### Simcoe

P.O. Box 247, 12 Gilbertson Drive  
Simcoe, ON N3Y 4L1  
519.426.6170 / 905.318.6623  
Fax: 519.426.4767

**Email:** [info@hnhu.org](mailto:info@hnhu.org)

**Web:** [www.hnhu.org](http://www.hnhu.org)

#### Caledonia

282 Argyle Street South  
Caledonia, ON N3W 1K7  
905.318.5367

