



A Message from Dr. Cory Neudorf
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Better Health for All

The **Better Health for All Series** highlights a number of key findings about the status of our health. We envision a community in which everyone has a chance to live a healthy life and where everyone has the same opportunities to reach their full health potential. Our series highlights what actions are being taken to make this vision a reality and what more we can do to create better opportunities for everyone in our community to achieve better health.

Series 2 provides a snapshot of the Health Region's immunization status; in other words, it looks at how we're doing in protecting our health. Ideally, everyone in our community would be protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Better Health for All Series 2: Immunization – What did we find?¹

Immunization rates for two year olds on the rise: Through very focussed and multi-pronged initiatives aimed at improving opportunities for a wide range of residents to receive immunization protection, the Health Region continues to see increases in immunization coverage rates for two-year-olds. (See below for a special focus on this initiative).

Children are well protected by school-age: Immunization coverage rates for children at school entry were high in 2013 with 92.6% of children up-to-date for measles vaccine and 80.3% up-to-date for pertussis vaccine.

HPV coverage rates rising: Selected vaccine coverage rates in adolescents also increased in 2013 with 75.8% of 13-year-old females receiving the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine compared to 63.3% in 2010.

At-risk population coverage low: Of concern is that coverage for pneumococcal disease and influenza is decreasing in older adult and adults who are medically at-risk. Among seniors aged 65 years and older 50.5% percent were immunized against influenza in 2013/14 compared to 57.2% in 2009/10. Further, 59.8% percent of adults at medical risk, ages 18 to 64, have not been vaccinated against pneumococcal disease.

Room for improvement in staff coverage rates: Influenza immunization coverage rates for Saskatoon Health Region staff is at 67.4% a slight increase from 65.4% five years ago.

¹ See CommunityView Collaboration www.communityview.ca for detailed definitions of these indicators.

Equity gap closing: The immunization disparity ratio for measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) at age 2-years between the areas of highest and lowest deprivation in Saskatoon for 2013 was 1.14, improving upon the Health Region's target of 1.21. The closer the disparity ratio gets to 1.0, the more equal immunization coverage rates are between areas of highest and lowest deprivation.

Reflecting on successes to improve two-year-old immunization coverage

In the calendar year of 2013, 79.9% of two-year-olds in the Region were immunized with two doses of measles as per the childhood immunization schedule. Since 2009, the absolute increase in percent coverage in the Region has been 3.8%, which represents 1,000 additional doses of vaccine over this time period.

This has been achieved over the last few years through several interventions, with the most significant impact being a system-wide automated voice messaging reminder system for all children under two-years-of-age, behind by two months with routine immunization and personal reminders for all children 20 to 24 months who are behind by one month. In addition, proactive reminders are sent for children at twelve months and four-years-of-age.

Another key important feature of this successful increase in coverage rates is the focused approach that Population and Public Health has taken to "close the gap" in inequalities in coverage rates between its most and least deprived neighbourhoods; that is, "leveling up" the most deprived neighbourhoods through a number of key approaches. Interventions that are making a difference include:

- Enhanced reminder system in 20 neighbourhoods with the lowest coverage, plus Rosthern quadrant. This includes personal telephone call or home visit by a Community Program Builder to discuss barriers to achieving immunization when children are behind starting at 2 months of age to 24 months.
- Free bus and taxi rides are offered if transportation is an issue.
- In-home immunization offered when all other strategies have been exhausted.
- Drop-in satellite clinics offered weekly in Saskatoon core neighbourhoods and Duck Lake.
- Added evening and weekend clinics to daytime service in Saskatoon.
- Fruit and vegetable market operated by CHEP Good Food Inc. at satellite clinics in the core neighbourhoods. A \$3 coupon is provided to clients to spend at the market.

Achieving Better Health for All – A Call to Greater Action

Building on the success of its intervention strategies to date, Saskatoon Health Region should continue its targeted approach toward providing opportunities for better health for all. Specifically, the Region should:

- Expand strategies to improve Saskatoon Health Region scheduled immunization coverage by two years of age with continued focus on narrowing the inequality gap for all vaccines.
- Explore new approaches to improving influenza and pneumococcal coverage rates for persons over 65 and medically at-risk with a focus on the most vulnerable populations.
- Explore new approaches to improve influenza immunization coverage rates for Saskatoon Health Region staff.
- Strengthen partnerships with other immunization providers to provide greater access to immunization services and credible information about vaccines.

A Final Word

We invite you to consider the information that we have presented in this message and through [CommunityView](#). It is our hope that you will use the *Better Health for All* series to inform the decisions you make towards advancing the vision of a community in which everyone has the opportunity to live healthy lives. Current planned releases² include:

Series 1, March 26 2014

Our Population-- A high level look at who lives in our Region. Differences in health outcomes by socioeconomic conditions will be released in upcoming series.

Series 2, May 21 2014

Immunization - Examines a selected set of immunization indicators to report on progress and gaps in coverage rates. Proposes further action to ensure equal opportunities for access to immunization.

Series 3, June 23 2014

How can the health system contribute to better health for all? Examines a range of health inequalities and proposes health care system action to create equal opportunities for all to achieve better health.

Series 4, Summer 2014

How healthy are we? A high level overview of sexually transmitted infections (STI), and hepatitis C in our Region.

Series 5, Fall 2014

How healthy are we? Examines HIV in our community and the challenges and successes in implementing the HIV Strategy. The context in which HIV work is carried out will be highlighted through the stories and voices of health care providers and persons living with HIV.

Series 6, release to be determined

How healthy are we? Discusses various health behaviours, maternal and child health, smoking rates, obesity, cancer screening rates, and early childhood development.

Series 7, release to be determined

A report on Community Wellbeing Developed in partnership with the Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee discusses, in greater detail, the social determinants of health and wellbeing.

² Revised from March 26, 2014 release.