

**Immunization Awareness is Key to the Health of Canadians**  
*National Immunization Awareness Week is 20 -27 April 2019*

**18 April 2019, OTTAWA, ON** — During National Immunization Awareness Week (NIAW), Immunize Canada wants all Canadians to ensure their defense against diseases is at full strength. NIAW, 20-27 April, is an annual event held to recognize the importance of immunization to our overall population health and prevention of diseases.

“Immunization is the strongest defense against preventable diseases,” said Immunize Canada Chair Dr. Shelly McNeil. “Vaccines are the most cost-effective and broad-reaching public health measure we have to stop the spread of diseases and keep all Canadians healthy. One of the best things we can do for our country’s health is boost immunization rates.”

Vaccine programs are highly effective in controlling and nearly eliminating dangerous diseases that can cause serious complications or death. In 1988, more than 125 countries were polio endemic, but now there are only three – Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria. “These statistics are a testament to the power of immunization and that we should be taking advantage of accessible vaccines,” says Safia Ibrahim, a polio survivor.

However, outbreaks —heightened by increased global mobility — and misinformation about vaccines; threaten their widespread success. “Children, seniors, pregnant women and others with compromised immune systems are most at risk of serious illness from the spread of disease,” said Dr. Anne Pham-Huy, Immunize Canada Vice-Chair.

Mallory Olsheski is the mother of such a child. “At the age of five months, my son underwent a heart transplant that saved his life,” said Olsheski. “It means he was given a second chance at life, and it also means he must receive immune system-suppressing medication for the rest of his life to prevent his body from rejecting his heart. I have to hope and trust that others are up to date with vaccinations so that my immune-compromised son can stay healthy.”

“Immunization is a safe and effective way of protecting ourselves and people at high risk like Ms. Olsheski’s son from illness, but everyone in between must be up to date on their immunizations too. It may be difficult to wade through the immense volume of information about vaccines, but a registered health provider is the best source of information. Every time you go to your health provider, you should be asking if your immunizations are up to date, and which vaccines you need to stay healthy. At the same time, health care providers have a responsibility to take every opportunity to review a patient’s immunization status,” said Dr. Anne Pham-Huy.

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**Immunize Canada** is a national coalition of non-governmental, professional, health, government and private sector organizations with a specific interest in promoting the understanding and use of vaccines as recommended by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). Immunize Canada has published a number of campaign materials — credible research, posters, social content and more — at [immunize.ca](http://immunize.ca) to help share important messages about immunization during NIAW.

**Links:**

Immunize Canada	<a href="http://immunize.ca">immunize.ca</a>	<a href="https://twitter.com/ImmunizedotCa">@ImmunizedotCa</a>
Canadian Public Health Association	<a href="http://cpha.ca">cpha.ca</a>	<a href="https://twitter.com/CPHA_ACSP">@CPHA_ACSP</a>
Public Health Agency of Canada	<a href="http://canada.ca/en/public-health.html">canada.ca/en/public-health.html</a>	<a href="https://twitter.com/GovCanHealth">@GovCanHealth</a>

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