

CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS

Canada's Largest Ever Survey of Canadian Parents on Their Attitudes Toward Childhood Vaccinations



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Canada's Largest Ever Survey of Canadian Parents on Their Attitudes Toward Childhood Vaccinations

Toronto, ON — Canadian parents clearly value childhood vaccinations, considering them at least as important as a proper diet and exercise for keeping children healthy a new poll released today shows. And, parents are very concerned about vaccine-preventable diseases – considering many of them very serious conditions and ones that their children are likely to contract if not immunized against them. The result is that, for the most part, parents are ensuring their children get the standard vaccinations – and many are getting recently introduced vaccines and/or are interested in learning more about new vaccines for children. Only 5 percent of parents feel there is no need for their child to be vaccinated.

This document summarizes the findings of Canada's largest ever survey of Canadian parents on their attitudes toward childhood vaccinations.

All data for this research were collected by Ipsos-Reid via 15-minute telephone interviews with parents of children under the age of seven. The research was sponsored by Wyeth-Ayerst Canada Inc. A total of 1,500 interviews were conducted between May 23rd and June 17th, 2001. A sample of this size carries an associated margin of error of ± 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Respondent sample was drawn from Ipsos-Reid's national panel which pre-identified respondents as having children in the target age range. Final data were weighted to reflect the population of parents of children under the age of seven according to the latest Census figures.



While a small proportion of parents have concerns over the safety of vaccines, for the most part parents rate childhood immunizations very safe – in fact, six in ten deem them very safe. Furthermore, the vast majority of parents consider immunization very beneficial for their children. And it's not only the children who stand to benefit. Parents report missing an average of more than six days of work or other commitments in a typical year due to ear infections. Parents also see the big picture, recognizing vaccinations as a means of preventing illness and thereby easing the burden on the healthcare system.

Virtually all parents say they would pay out of their own pocket for a vaccination to protect their child, but they also feel very strongly that governments should fund all vaccines. Indeed, one in five parents say they consider non-government funded vaccines to be less of a priority for their children, indicating the impact of government funding on the adoption of new vaccinations. To further illustrate this point, only one in five recall having ever been recommended a vaccination for their child that is not covered by the government. This would suggest that physicians – the most important source of information about vaccinations according to Canadian parents – are resistant to offering vaccines that parents have to pay for on their own.

Some of the key findings of the research include:

- 74% rate having children immunized a '10' on a scale of 0 (not at all important) to 10 (extremely important) – beating out healthy diet, washing their hands and exercise.
- 91% of parents believe vaccinating children may ease the burden on the healthcare system.
- 90% feel all children should have the standard vaccinations.
- 82% actively seek the most recent information about vaccinations.
- Only 5% feel there is no need for children to be vaccinated due to the elimination of vaccine-preventable illnesses.

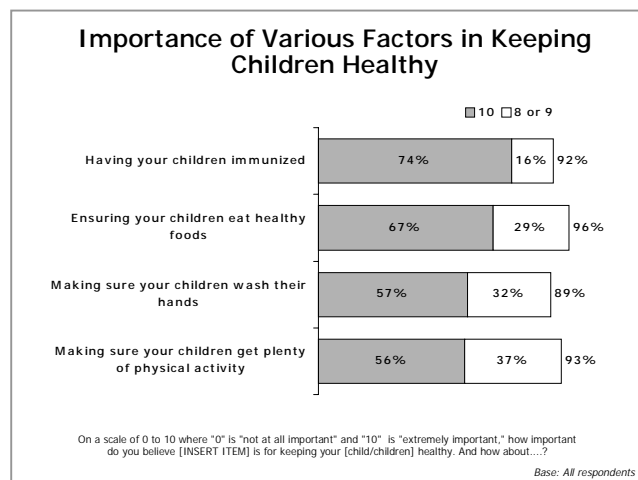


- 59% are very confident that vaccines are very beneficial (9 or 10 on scale of 0 to 10), with another 25% giving a rating of 8 out of 10.
- Prevention is the number one factor taken into account when deciding to get a vaccination.
- Meningitis and Hepatitis B rank highest on parental concern over children contracting the diseases, as well as parental perception of disease severity.
- 34% of parents have had to miss work or other commitments due to child's ear infection or tube procedure.
- Most parents adhere to children's vaccination schedule.
- 49% would discuss a new vaccine with their physician/pediatrician during their next appointment.
- 75% would turn to their physician for information on vaccines. Physicians also considered most credible source of information.
- Only 21% of parents recall having been offered or recommended a vaccination that is not covered by the government.
- 96% of parents would pay for a vaccine to protect their child out of their own pocket if they had to do so.
- 92% feel governments should fund all vaccines.
- 21% consider non-government funded vaccines less of a priority for their child.

The Study Findings

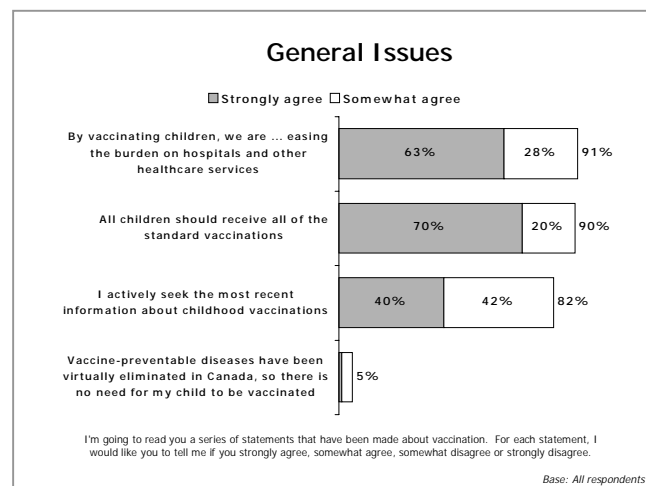
Parents Rate Immunizations Most Important Factor in Keeping Children Healthy

On a scale of 0 (not at all important) to 10 (extremely important), 74% of parents rate having children immunized as a full “10” in terms of its importance in keeping children healthy. Looking at the proportion who rated each of the four factors tested a solid “10” or “extremely important”, immunization beats out ensuring children eat healthy foods (67%), making sure children wash their hands (57%), and making sure children get plenty of physical activity (56%).



Nine out of Ten Agree Vaccination Best Method of Prevention

Nine in ten parents (91% total agree, 63% strongly agree) believe that vaccinating children can prevent illness and ease the burden on hospitals and other healthcare services. And, a solid majority (90%) feel that all children should receive all of the standard vaccinations (70% strongly agree). Only 5% of parents believe that vaccine-



preventable diseases have been virtually eliminated in Canada, thereby eliminating the need for children to be vaccinated.

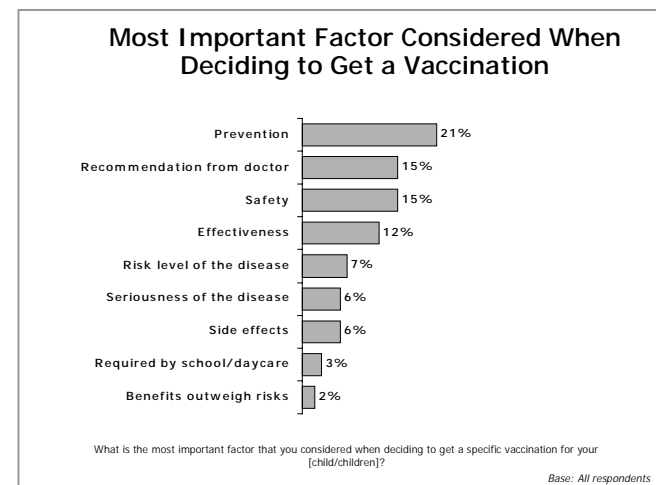
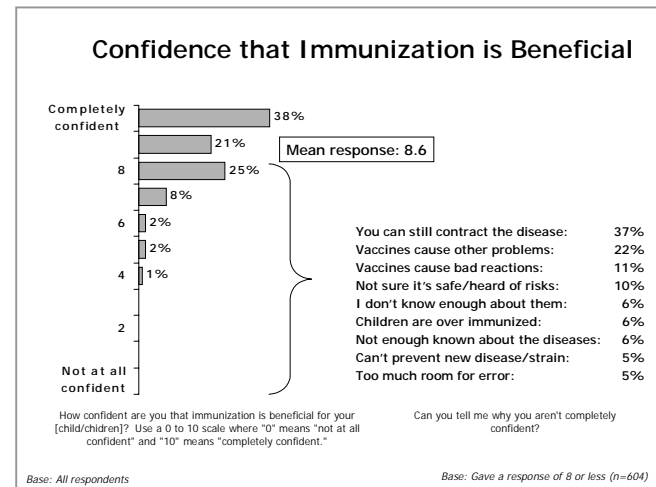
Six in Ten Very Confident that Immunization is Beneficial

With an average response out of 10 of 8.6, parents clearly view childhood immunizations as beneficial. In fact, the majority give a response of 9 (21%) or 10 (38%) on a ten-point scale where a 10 means ‘completely confident’. Another 25% gave a response of 8 out of 10.

Among the minority who gave a response of 8 or less, the number one reason for being less than completely confident that immunization is beneficial is the sense that “you can still contract the disease” (mentioned by 37%). Others feel that vaccines cause other problems (22%), or bad reactions (11%).

Prevention is Most Important Factor in Deciding to Get a Vaccination

On an open-ended basis, parents cite prevention (21%) more frequently than any other as being the most important factor they considered when deciding to get a specific vaccination for their child. A

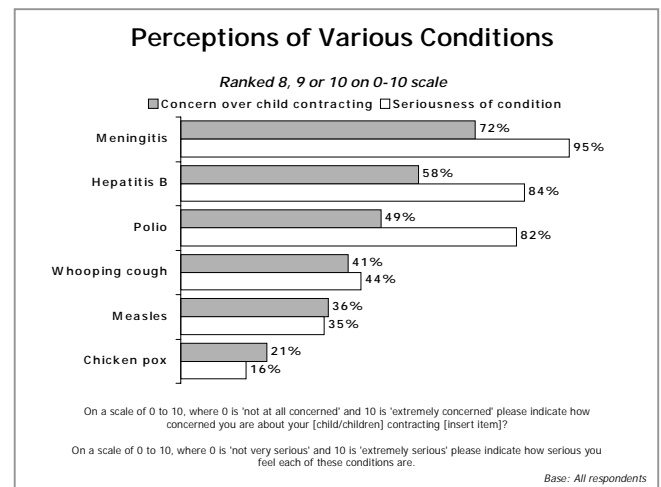


physician's recommendation and safety are priorities for 15% of parents, followed by efficacy at 12%.

Meningitis Ranks Highest on Concern over Contracting and Disease Severity

Three-quarters (72%) of parents rate meningitis an 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 0 (not at all concerned) to 10 (extremely concerned) in terms of how concerned they are about their child contracting the illness. Hepatitis B ranks second with 58% giving a response of 8 or higher. Rather surprisingly, 49% of parents indicate a high level of concern over their child contracting polio. Of the six diseases tested, whooping cough (41%), measles (36%) and chicken pox (21%) recorded the lowest levels of concern.

Mirroring parental concern over contracting these illnesses, meningitis is perceived as the most serious condition with 95% of parents rating it an 8 or higher, followed by hepatitis B (84%), polio (82%), whooping cough (44%), measles (35%) and chicken pox (16%). These results suggest that concern over a child contracting an illness is closely linked to how serious parents believes a particular illness is.



34% of Parents Have Missed Work or Other Commitments Because of Child's Ear Infection

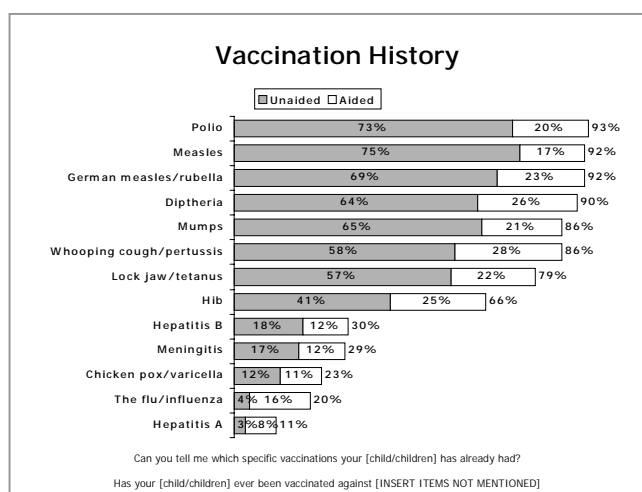
On average, parents are missing 6.5 days of work, school or other commitments in a typical year due to a child's ear infection or ear tube procedure.

Most Parents Adhere to Children's Vaccination Schedule

At least two thirds, and as many as 93% of parents have already had their children vaccinated against polio, measles, german measles, diphtheria, mumps, whooping cough, lock jaw, and Hib.

No more than 30% and as few as 11% have vaccinated against hepatitis B or A, meningitis, chicken pox, or influenza, and no more than 17% report plans to get any of these vaccinations for their children.

In every case, the reason cited most frequently for not getting or planning to get a specific vaccine is that it was not mentioned by a doctor/pediatrician. Conditions like whooping cough, chicken pox and influenza are viewed by some as not being serious enough to warrant vaccination. Rather alarmingly,

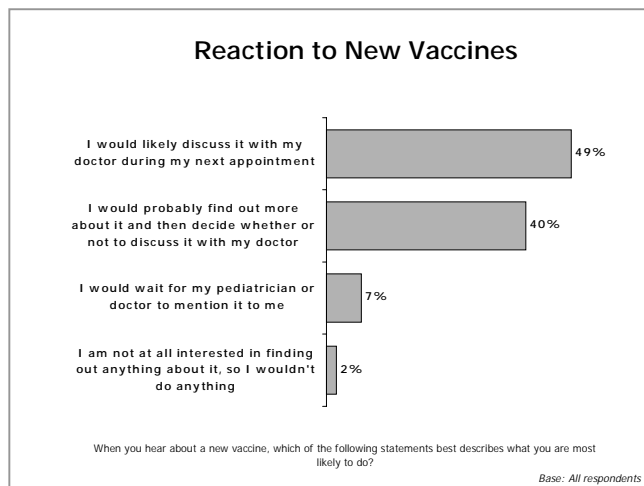


an average of about 10% of parents are not getting vaccines because they don't believe their child is at risk for highly contagious diseases like whooping cough, meningitis, hepatitis B or influenza.

Majority of Parents are Interested in New Vaccines

Half (49%) report that, if they heard about a new vaccine, they would likely discuss it with their doctor during their next appointment. Four in ten (40%) would find out more about it on their own and then decide whether or not to discuss it with their doctor.

Only one in ten say they would either wait for their doctor to mention it to them (7%) or that they are not at all interested in finding out about new vaccines (2%).



Physicians the Most Popular Source of Information on Childhood Immunizations

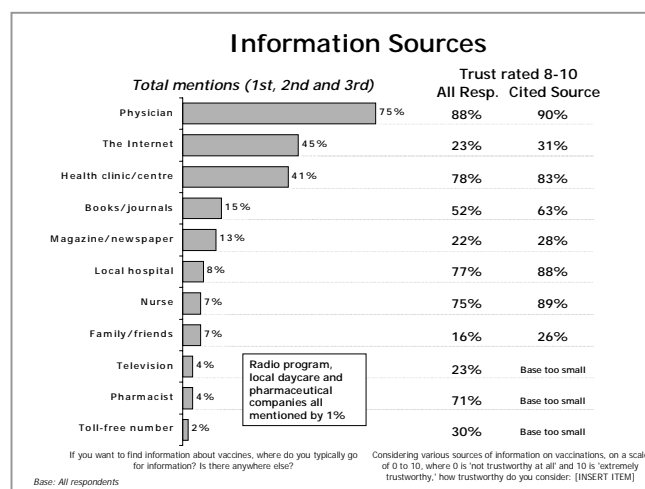
Three-quarters say they would go to their physician/pediatrician for information about vaccines. More than four in ten mention the Internet (45%) and health clinics (41%) as sources of information they would use.

When it comes to trustworthiness, the Internet falls short with only 23% giving it a trustworthiness rating of at least 8 out of 10. The most trusted sources of information are physicians (88%), health clinics (78%), hospitals (77%), nurses (75%) and pharmacists (71%).

Physicians Play Important Role in Educating Parents

More than eight in ten (86%) of parents report that their child's doctor or nurse has taken time to explain which vaccinations they are giving, and another 75% say they are taking the time to explain the risks and benefits associated with the vaccinations they are giving. Six in ten (61%) have been provided with written information about each vaccination their child has received.

Parents clearly want information – three quarters (76%) have asked their child's doctor or nurse about the vaccinations they are providing. Of this group, the large majority (93%) say their questions have been answered to their satisfaction.



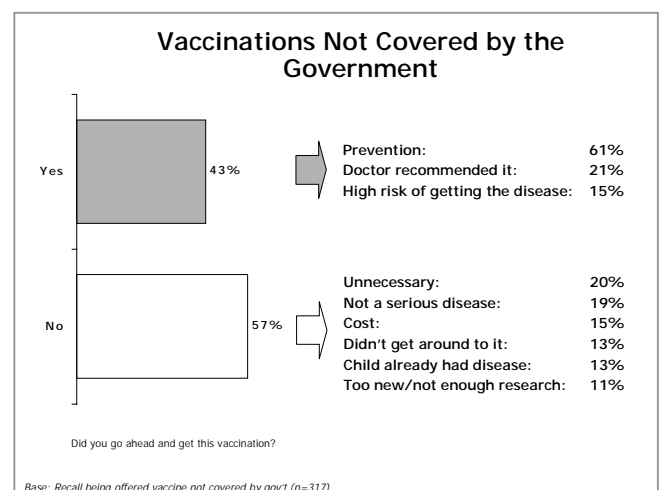
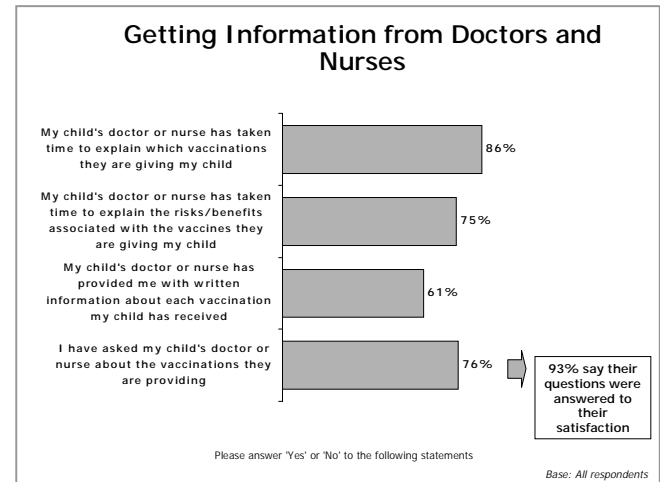
Physicians May Not be Offering – and Parents May Not be Getting – Vaccines That Aren’t Covered by Government

Only one in five (21%) respondents can recall having been offered a vaccination for their child that is not covered by the government. Of this group, most (57%) did not get this vaccination. For the most part, such vaccines were deemed unnecessary (20%), or for a disease that is not serious (19%). For one in seven (15%) the decision not to get a government-funded vaccine was based on cost.

Among those who went ahead and got the vaccination, the majority (57%) of those who have private drug insurance, paid for the vaccination through it.

Parents Will Pay for Vaccinations Out-of-Pocket if They Have to, but Feel Governments Should be Funding Them

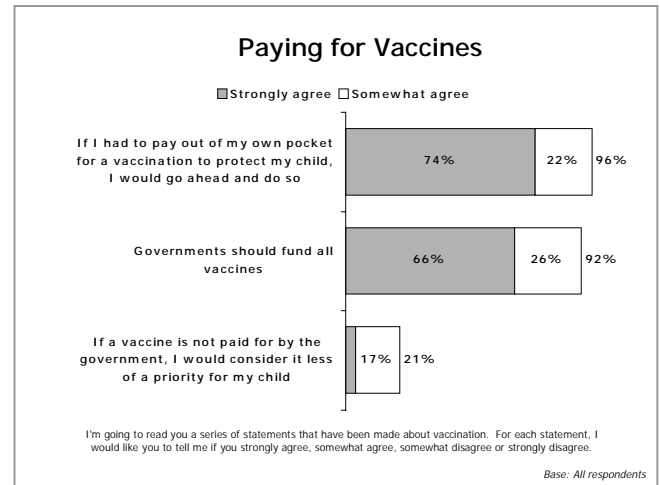
Three-quarters of parents strongly agree that if they had to pay out of their own pocket for a vaccination to protect their child, they would go ahead and do so. Another 22% somewhat agree with this





statement. Nonetheless, two-thirds strongly agree that governments should fund all vaccines – with a further 26% somewhat agreeing.

Only one in five (4% strongly agree, 17% somewhat agree) say they consider vaccines not paid for by the government less of a priority for their child. This suggests that fully four in five parents believe that government funding is an indication of a higher priority vaccine.



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For more information on this news release, please contact:

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