

# **CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS**

## **A Survey of Canadian Parents on Their Attitudes Toward Childhood Vaccinations**



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## **CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS**

### ***A Survey of Canadian Parents on Their Attitudes Toward Childhood Vaccinations***

**Toronto, ON--** The results of a recent Wyeth/Ipsos-Reid survey of Canadian parents of children under 5 indicate that Canadian parents clearly value childhood vaccinations. A majority of parents of children under 5 consider immunizations as important as healthy foods, physical activity and washing hands are to their children's health. 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.

The vast majority of parents feel that all vaccines should be covered in all provinces, although currently vaccine coverage for some diseases, such as meningitis, varies from province to province. Parents agree that all children should receive all of the recommended vaccinations and that governments should fund all vaccines. Most also agree that by vaccinating children we are preventing illnesses and therefore easing the burden on hospitals and other healthcare services. And while the vast majority of parents would pay out of pocket for a vaccination to protect their children, one-quarter indicate that if the government does not pay for a vaccine, they would consider it less of a priority for their children.

The survey also highlights a lack of awareness among parents of children under 5 of which vaccinations are covered in each province.

*This document summarizes the findings the largest ever survey of Canadian parents of children under the age of 5 about their attitudes toward childhood vaccinations. All data for this research were collected by Ipsos-Reid via 20-minute telephone interviews with parents of children under the age of 5. The research was sponsored by Wyeth Canada. A total of 1,001 parents were interviewed between May 19<sup>th</sup> and May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The overall results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error will be larger for subgroups or regional breakdowns of the data. Respondents sample was drawn from Ipsos-Reid's national panel*

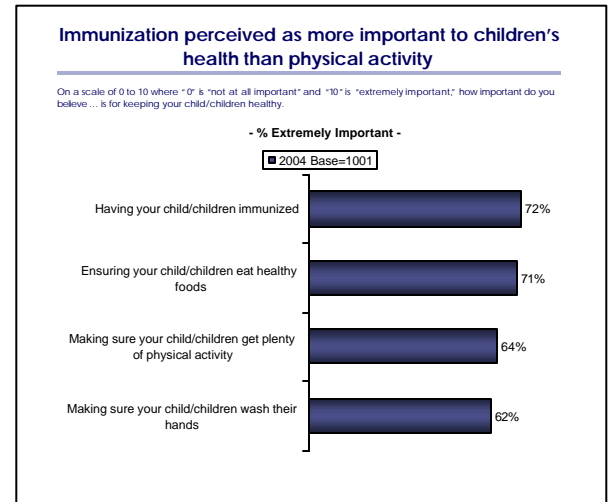
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which pre-identified respondents as having children in the target age range. Final data were weighted to reflect the population of parents of children under the age of 5 according to the latest Census figures.

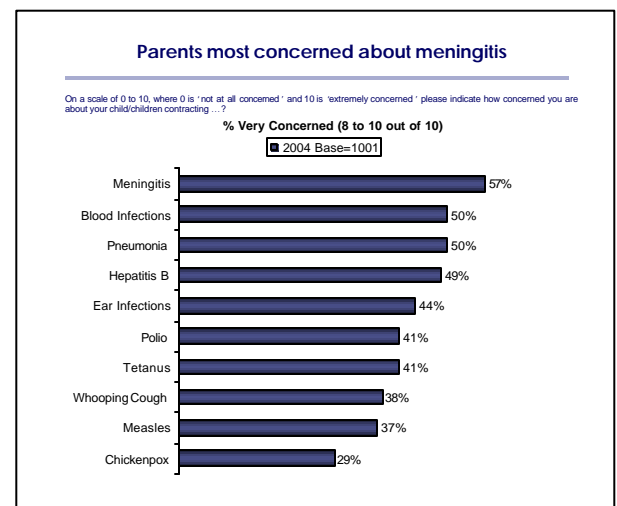
## ***Parents Rate Immunizations Important Factor in Keeping Children Healthy***

- Seven in ten (72%) rate the importance of immunizations 10 on a scale from 0 to 10 (where '0' is not at all important and '10' is extremely important). This compares to 71% for healthy eating, 64% for physical activity and 62% for washing hands.
- There are many vaccine-preventable diseases that parents are concerned about their children contracting which, if their child is not immunized against them, they believe their children are likely to contract.



## ***Parents Most Concerned With Meningitis***

- Parents are most concerned about their children contracting meningitis (57% rate 8 to 10 on a scale of '0'– not at all concerned to '10'– extremely concerned), pneumonia (50%), blood infections (50%) and hepatitis B (49%)
- Parents believe their children are most likely to contract chickenpox (83% very or somewhat likely), ear infections (76%), measles (73%), pneumonia (68%) and meningitis (67%) and tetanus (63%).



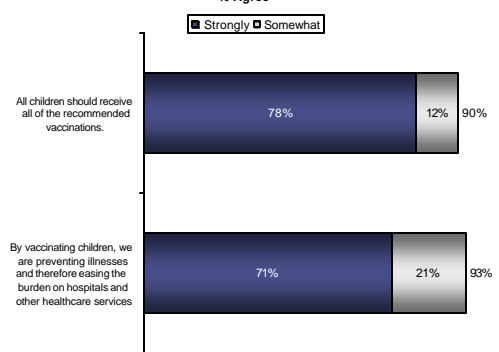
## Parents Support Childhood Vaccinations Being Covered by Government

Although currently vaccine coverage for some diseases, such as meningitis, varies from province to province, nearly all parents feel that all vaccines should be covered in all provinces (92%).

- The primary reason is that they wouldn't have to pay (at least 23% in all provinces) and at least one in ten say they wouldn't be able to afford it or that vaccinations that are covered must be important/recommended.
- Nationally, 81 percent of parents agree that it is not fair that certain provinces cover the costs of vaccines, while in other provinces parents have to pay out of pocket for vaccines.
- Nine in ten parents agree that all children should receive all of the recommended vaccinations (90%) and that governments should fund all vaccines (93%).
- As many also agree that by vaccinating children we are preventing illnesses and therefore easing the burden on hospitals and other healthcare services (93%).

### Vast majority believe that children should receive all vaccinations and that vaccinations prevent illness and burden on system

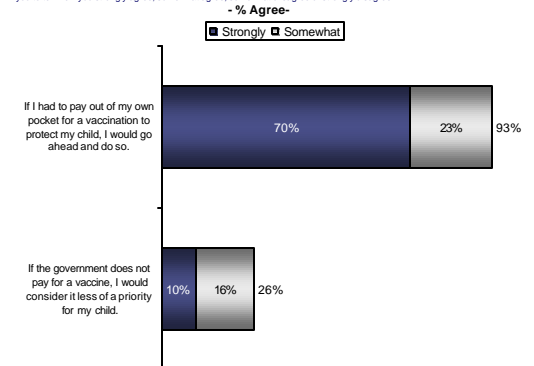
I'm going to read you a series of statements that have been made about vaccination in general. For each statement, I would like you to tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.



- And while the vast majority of parents would pay out of pocket for a vaccination to protect their children (93%), 26% indicate that if the government does not pay for a vaccine, they would consider it less of a priority for their children.

### Vast majority of parents would pay out of pocket, but 26% would consider a vaccination less of a priority

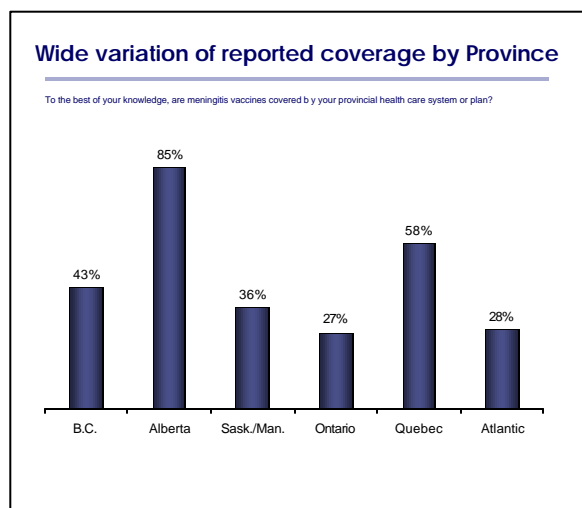
I'm going to read you a series of statements that have been made about vaccination in general. For each statement, I would like you to tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.



## ***Lack of Awareness of Vaccine Coverage***

- Many parents (45% nationally) do not know that the costs of some vaccines are covered by their provincial health system such as vaccines for meningitis, including vaccines to help protect against pneumococcal meningitis and meningococcal meningitis.
- Despite the fact that meningitis ranks among the top vaccine-preventable diseases that parents are concerned about their children contracting, only 61% have had their children vaccinated against meningitis<sup>1</sup> – less than many other vaccine-preventable illnesses.
- In provinces where meningitis vaccines are covered, the proportion of parents who know the vaccines are covered by the province varies greatly -- as does the incidence of vaccinations.
- In BC, where meningitis vaccines are paid for by government, less than half (43%) of parents are aware that the vaccines are covered

<sup>1</sup> Parents who reported having their child/children vaccinated against meningitis were asked to qualify whether their child/children received the meningococcal, Hib or pneumococcal vaccine(s) -- 57% could not name the meningitis vaccine their child/children received.



compared to 85% in Alberta, where both vaccines are also covered.

- Half (53%) of parents in BC and Alberta say they are more likely to have their child vaccinated against meningitis given that the vaccines are covered by the province.
- In Manitoba and Ontario, where the respective governments have recently announced that meningitis vaccines will be covered, 52% say they are more likely to have their children receive the vaccines once they are covered.
- In Quebec, where only one of the new meningitis vaccines is not currently covered, 41% of parents would be more likely to get their child vaccinated if they were covered.

## ***Other National Findings:***

### ***Parents Look to Paediatricians and Family Physicians for Information on Immunization***

When it comes to information about vaccines, most parents rely on their family physician (58%) or their child's paediatrician (17%). A strong minority (46%) uses the Internet as a source of information about vaccines, and 35% get their information from health clinics or public health centres.

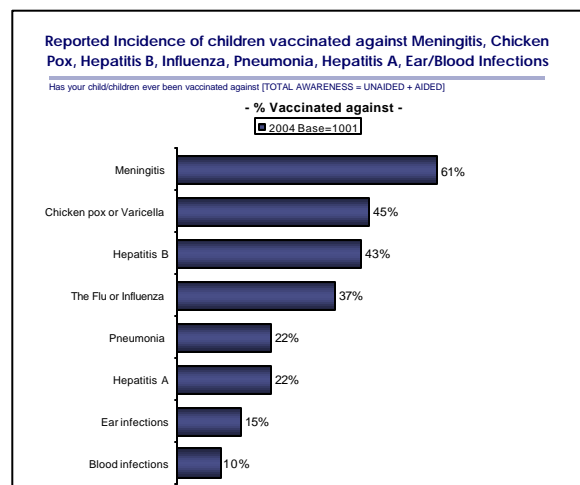
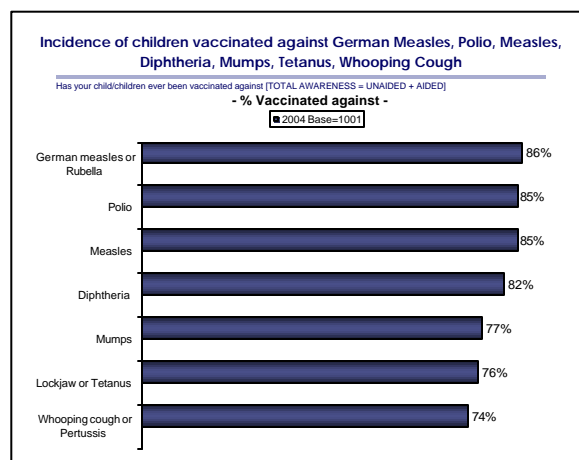
Paediatricians and family physicians are the most trusted source of information about vaccinations. More than three-quarters rate their child's paediatrician (84%) or family physicians (78%) as extremely trustworthy.

- Half (49%) of parents rely on their physician to prompt them to vaccinate their child, and 77% say they would be unlikely to give their child a vaccine that was not specifically recommended by their physician.

- Most parents believe childhood vaccinations are safe (83% rate 8 to 10 on a scale from '0' – not at all safe to '10' – completely safe). Moreover, eighty-six percent agree that vaccines are one the safest forms of medicine ever developed. Indeed, a high proportion of parents have had their children vaccinated against the standard childhood diseases.
- More than eight in ten (87%) parents report that their child's doctor or nurse has taken the time to explain which vaccinations they are giving, and 79% say they took the time to explain the risk/benefits associated with the vaccines they are giving.
- Fewer parents report receiving written information about each vaccination their child receives (68%).
- Eighty-five percent of parents have asked their child's doctor or nurse about the vaccinations they are providing, and of those, 92% say their questions were answered to their satisfaction.

## ***Most Parents Adhere to Children's Immunization Schedule***

- At least three-quarters, and as many as 86% of parents have already had their children vaccinated against: German measles or rubella (86%), measles (85%), polio (85%), diphtheria (82%), mumps (77%), lockjaw or tetanus (76%), and whooping cough (74%).
- Six in ten (61%) have had their children vaccinated against meningitis<sup>2</sup>. Of those, 51% have had their children vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis, 38% against pneumococcal, 42% against Hib (Haemophilus Influenza type B). Four in ten have had their children vaccinated against chickenpox (45%), and hepatitis B (43%).
- Fewer than four in ten have had their children vaccinated against the flu (37%), pneumonia (22%), hepatitis A (22%), ear infections (15%) and blood infections (10%).
- One in ten parents plan to have their children vaccinated against meningitis (12%), chickenpox (11%) and hepatitis B (10%).



<sup>2</sup> Parents who reported having their child/children vaccinated against meningitis were asked to qualify whether their child/children received the meningococcal, Hib or pneumococcal vaccine(s) -- 57% could not name the meningitis vaccine their child/children received.



A recommendation from a physician (24%) is the most important factor parents consider when deciding whether or not to get a specific vaccination for their children , followed by risk level (14%) and safety of the vaccine (12%).

- One in ten (11%) parents say cost is among the most important factors in their decision – 2% say it is the most important.
- Half (46%) of parents were recommended a vaccination that was not covered by the government. Of those, 33% did not have their child vaccinated. The primary reasons for not getting the vaccination are because they couldn't afford the vaccinations (33%) or they did not feel it was necessary (23%).

### ***Majority of Parents are Interested in New Vaccines***

- Half (52%) of parents report that if they heard about a new vaccine, they would likely discuss it with their doctor during their next appointment. One-third (32%) would find out more about it on their own and then decide whether or not to discuss it with their physician.
- Only 13 %say they would wait for their doctor to mention it to them and 2 percent are not at all interested in finding out anything about new vaccines.

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