

For Immediate Release | February 14, 2018

## Interior Health declares an end to the meningococcal disease outbreak

KELOWNA—Following significant uptake for immunizations, and no additional cases since December 28, 2017, Interior Health is declaring an end to the meningococcal outbreak in the Okanagan.

Over 14,000 Okanagan residents aged 15-19 are now protected against meningococcal disease, of which 11,417 immunizations administered as part of the outbreak—the highest number of total immunizations given as part of an Interior Health-declared outbreak.

“The Office of the Provincial Health Officer and BC Centre for Disease Control have been working closely with Interior Health since the start of the outbreak,” says Dr. Bonnie Henry Provincial Health Officer. “We commend Interior Health’s efforts and collaboration with local communities to expand immunization which played a critical role in preventing the spread of this devastating disease and ending the outbreak.”

Interior Health credits this milestone immunization uptake to its partnership with school officials and community stakeholders in the Okanagan that resulted in quickly mobilizing large school immunization clinics, availability of vaccine at local pharmacies, and significant media coverage.

Interior Health’s response to the outbreak has been significant—arranging thousands of doses of vaccine transported from across Canada, scheduling hundreds of clinics to offer immunizations throughout the Okanagan and partnering with local pharmacies as another option for individuals to access vaccine.

“I want to thank the public for helping us reach this milestone, by sharing information with their friends and family and encouraging those most at risk to get immunized,” says Dr. Silvina Mema, Medical Health Officer, Interior Health. “A large proportion of the high-risk population is now protected against meningococcal disease, which will greatly reduce the likelihood of future cases of this disease.”

From late September to November 2017, three cases of meningococcal disease were identified in the Oliver area, prompting Interior Health to take public health action by offering free immunization at Oliver Secondary School. This was later expanded to individuals up to age 24 in the Okanagan Falls and Osoyoos areas.

On December 14, after an increasing trend of cases over a six-month period, Interior Health in consultation with the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Provincial Health Officer, declared an Okanagan-wide meningitis outbreak affecting 15-19 year olds. The outbreak declaration was immediately followed by a mass immunization campaign for all Okanagan residents in this age group.

## Immunization Stats

- 16,687 – Total number of doses of vaccine brought to the Okanagan
- 14,503 – Total number of eligible residents who have received the Meningococcal Quadrivalent vaccine before or during the outbreak (11,417 received vaccine during the outbreak)
- 2,185 – Most immunizations on a single day (December 19, 2017)
- 68.3 per cent – Percentage of target population immunized
- 73 – Total immunization clinics held at secondary and post-secondary schools in December and January
- 8,210 – Total number of students immunized at school clinics

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