



Media Advisory

April 24 is World Meningitis Day: Take Action to #DefeatMeningitis

Ottawa, Ontario, April 23, 2021

On World Meningitis Day, [Immunize Canada](#), the [Meningitis Foundation Canada](#) and the [International Federation on Ageing \(IFA\)](#) are joining the [Confederation of Meningitis Organisations \(CoMO\)](#) to help #DefeatMeningitis.

Meningococcal meningitis (bacterial meningitis) is a devastating disease. It can affect anyone of any age but is more common in children and young adults. For survivors, life does not just bounce back, with 10 to 20% of survivors experiencing a range of life-changing after effects that may include brain injury, depression, hearing loss, and/or limb loss for those who also contract sepsis.

It is estimated there are over 2.5 million new cases and 230,000 deaths globally from meningitis each year. Prevention is more important than ever to help save lives and reduce the burden of illness worldwide.

In addition, for each person directly affected by meningococcal meningitis, there are scores of family members and friends that suffer from anxiety and depression as they watch their loved ones struggling to cope. Meningitis is a serious illness. Even for those who survive with no long-term impacts, there is a clear distinction between life before and life after meningitis.

There is still hope that we can make meningococcal meningitis a disease of the past. The introduction of meningococcal immunization programs in the early 2000s have had a positive impact on reducing the incidence of meningitis globally. Immunization is one of several tools that we have for preventing infection, and it is a cornerstone of the [World Health Organization's \(WHO\) Global Roadmap to Defeat Meningitis by 2030](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the need to find preventative options highlights the role vaccines play in ensuring we can freely live our lives without fear of being struck down by a dangerous disease. In order to curb the spread of infectious diseases, we rely on everyone to protect their own health and the health of people within their community.

Immunize Canada, Meningitis Foundation Canada and the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) call upon the global community to join us as we recognize the importance of prevention so that together we can #DefeatMeningitis.

Canadian experts are available to speak with media.

Quotes

Immunize Canada

“Meningococcal disease is a rare but serious infection with potentially devastating complications. Children, adolescents, young adults, seniors, and people with compromised immune systems are most at risk of serious illness from the spread of meningococcal disease. Immunization is a safe and effective way of protecting them 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. In our busy interconnected world, the best way to protect yourself and the people around you is to get immunized.” - Dr. Anne Pham-Huy, Chair of Immunize Canada and a physician specializing in infectious diseases at CHEO, a pediatric hospital and research centre in Ottawa, Ontario

Meningitis Foundation Canada

“As government leaders look ahead to rebuild and fortify nations against diseases, let us all ensure that meningitis awareness and prevention is top of mind. The Meningitis Foundation Canada is raising awareness of this ‘indiscriminate killer disease’ and calling on all provincial and territorial policymakers in Canada to act to #DefeatMeningitis. This call aligns with the newly ratified ‘Global Roadmap to Defeat Meningitis by 2030’.” – Kathryn Blain, Executive Director, Meningitis Foundation Canada

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

“Despite popular misconceptions, meningitis can affect people of all age groups, even older adults. Older adults infected with meningitis often face serious and life-altering consequences, including a rapid decline in functional ability, and even death. Vaccination throughout life is the only action to reduce rates of infection and enable all citizens to participate in that which they value.” – Dr. Jane Barratt, Secretary General, IFA

Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) – a part of the Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF)

“This World Meningitis Day is the first where we can start really bringing people together through the WHO’s new Global Roadmap, which is a fantastic opportunity to ensure we have systems in place worldwide to prevent this terrible disease and support people who have already been affected. We’ve seen recently how people can come together to protect lives; now is the moment to join forces to #DefeatMeningitis.” - Sam Nye, CoMO Network Lead, MRF

We know everyone’s actions count in the fight to defeat meningitis. For more information about World Meningitis Day, please visit: <https://www.comomeningitis.org/world-meningitis-day-2021>

[National Immunization Awareness Week \(NIAW\) - April 24 to 30, 2021](#)

#VaccinesWork #NIAW2021

National Immunization Awareness Week (NIAW) is an annual event held in the last week of April to highlight and recognize the importance of immunization. Immunization reduces the risk of morbidity and mortality associated with vaccine-preventable diseases in infants, pregnant women, older adults, people with one or more comorbidities, and people with medical conditions that require the use of therapies that suppress or compromise their immune system. Immunizations are essential.

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To schedule an interview with a Canadian expert, please contact:

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