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ATTN: First Nations community members across Saskatchewan

This week we entered into a more hopeful phase in our fight against COVID-19 with the beginning of vaccinations for children five to eleven years old. There is no doubt that vaccinating this group of children will help limit the spread of the disease in our communities as this group has accounted for 18% of new cases in First Nation communities since September 2021. In light of new and emerging variants of concern and the impact COVID-19 has had on children, it is very important every family member who is eligible to get their first dose of vaccine, do so, before the holidays.

The pediatric vaccine was approved by Health Canada on November 19, 2021 and a week later it is being given to children across the country. This vaccine was 90.7% effective at preventing COVID-19 in children. The vaccine is safe and no serious side-effects were identified. It will be given in two doses, with a recommended interval of 8 weeks (minimum interval of 21 days) between the first and second. Our goal is have 85 - 90% of children fully vaccinated as soon as possible.

This is good news for parents and for schools as most children attending schools in Saskatchewan are now eligible for vaccination. Hopefully, early in the new year, most school children will be fully vaccinated and their school learning and extracurricular activities can begin to get closer to normal with fewer outbreaks.

Parents or guardians can book an appointment by contacting their Community Health Nurse. Vaccinations are now available for everyone born in the calendar year 2016 or before. Children born in 2017 will become eligible on their fifth birthday. If parent or other family members have not received two doses of vaccine, they are welcome to book appointments at the same time.

Booster shots are also available for those community members who are 50 years of age or who have underlying health conditions that put them at more risk if they contract COVID-19 (and six months from their second dose). The full list of those eligible for a booster shot is available [here](#). If you or a family member are eligible for a booster dose, we encourage you to book you appointment as soon as possible.

The news about the pediatric vaccine is very encouraging, but it will be some time before we reach the level of vaccination needed to curb the spread of the disease. So please continue to take these simple steps to protect yourself and your family: wear a non-medical mask whenever you are away from home; stay home if you are not feeling; wash your hands frequently (or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer); and avoid large gathering particularly if they are held indoors.

Respectfully,

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