

## **Boosting Vaccine Confidence Critical with Return to In-Person Learning, say Family Doctors**

*Research Finds Parents Concerned about Vaccinating their Children May be More Likely to Do So After Speaking with A Family Doctor*

September 29, 2021 (TORONTO) – As children across the province are returning to school, the Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) is reinforcing the need to increase vaccine confidence among parents after its latest survey found 19 per cent of parents with kids ages 12 to 17 are not comfortable getting their children vaccinated against COVID-19.

The OCFP surveyed 1,500 adult residents of Ontario about vaccine hesitancy in school-age children and found Ontario parents are deeply concerned about vaccination rates, the Delta variant, and the future of in-person learning. “It is more important than ever to build confidence in the vaccines among parents and guardians of school-age children,” said Dr. Elizabeth Muggah, President of the OCFP.

Adding to the urgency: about half (48 per cent) of Ontarians with at least one child between ages 12 to 17 are not comfortable having non-vaccinated children in school with their child. A lower proportion (35 per cent) are comfortable. Further, parents (41 per cent) don’t want their child(ren) returning to in-person learning if Delta variant results in higher cases.

Among parents who might or will not vaccinate their 12- to 17-year-old child, the top reasons included a desire for more clinical trials or testing, as well as concerns about the side effects.

“We know parents have a lot of information to sort through when it comes to vaccinating their children, and we are here to help them work through their concerns,” said Dr. Muggah. “While children may be at lower risk from the virus, sadly some still do experience serious illness. It’s important students, their families and their communities are protected so we can all get back to normal life as soon as possible.”

In the coming months if children aged 2 to 11 are the next cohort to be vaccinated, the research shows that the younger the child, the more hesitant parents become. Of those parents or guardians with at least one child under 12 years of age, 26 per cent said they are not comfortable with their kids 2 to 11 being vaccinated.

“Parents want to do well by their children and it’s natural they’ll have questions,” said Muggah. “It’s clear from the research that Ontarians trust their family doctors, and we’re ready and available to help them make informed decisions about COVID-19 vaccinations.”

Family doctors have been helping to improve vaccine confidence:

- Among parents who had a conversation with their family doctor prior to getting their child vaccinated, fully 84 per cent felt the conversation was a valuable way of obtaining information about it and alleviating concerns.
- Almost 90 per cent of survey respondents ranked family doctors as the most trusted health-care provider.
- Just over 86 per cent said they go to their family doctors first for advice on their health.

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“Family doctors want to continue having those important discussions with their patients,” said Dr. Mekalai Kumanan, President-elect of the OCFP. “On behalf of our members, we encourage all parents who have questions about vaccines to reach out to their family doctors to schedule a conversation.”

In addition to booking time with their family doctors, parents and their school-age children can access more information about vaccines from Ontario’s [Children’s COVID-19 Vaccine Advisory Table](#), and resources in multiple languages are also available on the Ontario’s COVID-19 [communication resources webpage](#).

### **About the Survey**

The OCFP online study was conducted by Discover from August 5 to 20, 2021, among a total of n=1,500 adult residents of Ontario, 18 years of age and older. The survey has an estimated margin of error of +/- 2.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20. As well, we obtained an over-sample of parents/guardians of children 12 to 17 for whom they are at least partially involved in their health care related decisions, such that we obtained a total of 767 respondents from this important segment. A combination of quotas and weights were used to ensure the total sample of 1,500 Ontarians reflects the population distribution of the province with respect to gender, age, and region.

### **About the Ontario College of Family Physicians**

The OCFP represents more than 15,000 family physicians across the province. OCFP supports our members by providing evidence-based education and professional development, promoting and recognizing leadership excellence in family medicine, and advocating for the vital role family physicians play in delivering the highest quality care to patients and families across Ontario. A not-for-profit and voluntary organization, the OCFP was established in 1954 and is the provincial chapter of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. ([ontariofamilyphysicians.ca](http://ontariofamilyphysicians.ca))

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### **For more information or to schedule an interview:**

Karen Archer  
Ontario College of Family Physicians  
(416) 875-3778  
[media@ocfp.on.ca](mailto:media@ocfp.on.ca)