

Next week last chance to get vaccinated

By Sarah Sobanski

More than 1,000 students in Hastings and Prince Edward counties need to get vaccinated.

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health issued suspension notices to 1,400 students early in March. The notices were issued to both elementary and high school students.

Program manager for the health unit Bill Sherlock said the number of students is equivalent to almost an entire grade across the counties.

‘[It’s] about the same as we’ve had in previous years, but it’s a large number of the population,’ said Sherlock. ‘Hastings Prince Edward Public Health has [about] 1,500 students in every grade and every year for high schools and seven-year-olds.’

According to a press release by the health unit vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, mumps and whooping cough, are still a threat. They continue to infect children, resulting in hospitalizations every year.

The health unit stated students have to provide updated immunization records, conscientious objections or medical exemptions to the health unit before April 21 to avoid suspension.

Sherlock explained it’s important for students to get immunized to protect those who can’t. Around one per cent of students can’t get vaccinated due to medical complications. Another two to three per cent are objectors.

The suspensions are a way of getting the larger populations of students vaccinated.

‘If you just send reminders parents won’t get their children immunized,’ said Sherlock. ‘We’re trying to protect those that are vulnerable.’

The health unit is providing additional vaccinations clinics to give children the opportunity to get immunized before the end of April. There will be one at North Hastings High School April 20 and another at 1 Manor Lane April 21. More information on the clinics can be found at www.hpepublichealth.ca.