

ONTARIO REGION UPDATE

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FAQ: Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD)

There has been an increase of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) over the last year in Canada, with 2025 marking the highest number of reported cases in more than a decade. The increase has disproportionately impacted people from Indigenous communities in some regions, including Ontario and Manitoba.

Manitoba has been dealing with an IMD outbreak since November 2023, linked to a certain subtype of the bacteria that causes the disease. The Northwestern Health Unit in Ontario also identified an increase of this subtype in their area. The following is a summary of frequently asked questions (FAQ) about IMD. This info can help support communication with community members.

What is IMD?

- Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD) is a very serious infection caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria, also known as “meningococcus”
- About 1 in 5 healthy teens and adults are carriers of the bacteria, but carriers do not develop IMD

How do you get IMD?

- IMD happens when the bacteria enter sterile body sites, such as blood or spinal fluid. This can **very quickly** become a life-threatening infection

Who is at risk?

- Most common in children under 5 years old, teenagers, and young adults between 18 and 24 years old
- Others include close contacts of a person with IMD (particularly household contacts), and those with a weakened immune system
- [Click here for a detailed list of those at a higher risk of developing IMD](#)



Please scroll to the next page for more information about IMD, including symptoms.



What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms usually develop 2 to 10 days after a person is exposed to someone who is sick from or carries meningococcus
- First symptoms are common signs of infection, like a sudden fever, chills, feeling generally unwell, and/or extreme tiredness
- [Progresses to more serious symptoms](#), such as:
 - Headache
 - Stiff neck
 - Nausea and often vomiting
 - Sensitivity to light
 - Confusion or changes in alertness
 - Muscle aches or limb pain
 - Rash with reddish/purplish spots

What can be done to prevent IMD?



- [Immunization is the key to preventing IMD](#)
- All community members are strongly encouraged to ensure they are up to date with their meningococcal vaccines
- Other preventative measures include:
 - Not sharing personal items, such as cups, water bottles, toothbrushes, and eating utensils
 - Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing
 - Keeping high touch surfaces clean and disinfected
 - Washing your hands often, using soap and water, or alcohol-based hand rub

Are there treatments for IMD?

- Recognizing symptoms early and getting antibiotic treatment are vital to reducing the risk of serious health complications and death
- Close contacts of a person with IMD may be recommended antibiotics and immunization to prevent infection

Resources

- Poster: [Protect your child from meningococcal disease](#)
- Poster: [Meningococcal disease in teens and young adults](#)
- Graphic: [Myth: meningococcal disease is easy to diagnose](#)



Search & Rescue Fund

The Government of Canada has launched the 2026-2027 call for proposals for the [Search and Rescue New Initiatives Fund](#) (SAR NIF). This fund supports projects that will improve Canada's search and rescue capacity across the country.

The deadline to submit an application is May 15, 2026, at 9:00 am (Eastern Time).

The annual SAR NIF budget is \$6.5 million. Projects must be completed within 36 months. Funding available for new projects will vary from year to year due to the ongoing nature of projects. Eligible projects will:

- help search and rescue responses be more effective in federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions
- improve the search and rescue community's ability to share response and prevention best practices
- promote safe activities to reduce the need for search and rescue operations

For more information about the fund or applying, please contact the SAR NIF via email: sarnif-fnirs@ps-sp.gc.ca.

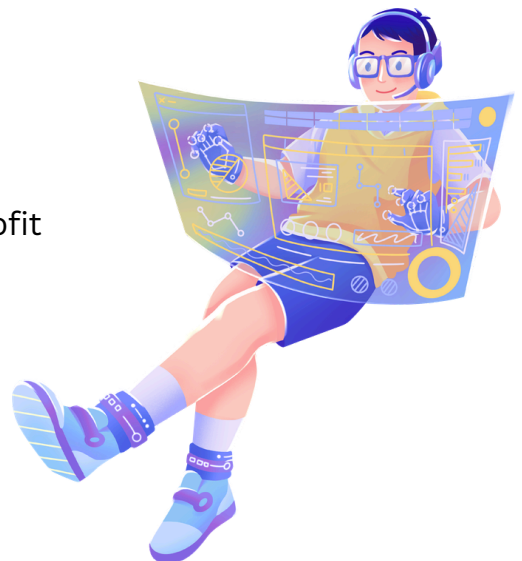
Digital Skills for Youth

The [Digital Skills for Youth](#) (DS4Y) program is accepting proposals. Supported by \$23.8 million in federal funding to be invested over two years, DS4Y is part of the [Youth Employment and Skills Strategy](#) (YESS) from the Government of Canada. The program helps provide Canadian youth with the tools, skills and experience they need to succeed in today's labour market.

The deadline to submit a proposal is Friday, May 22, 2026, at 9:00am (Eastern Time).

Through this call for proposals, the government is looking for organizations with a strong network of employers that can provide post-secondary graduates with training and work experience to help them prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. Indigenous governments, band councils and other not-for-profit groups representing Indigenous people are eligible to apply.

For more information, please visit the [news release](#).





Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award

The [Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award](#) is a prestigious recognition for exceptional service and achievement. This award, a partnership between federal, provincial, and territorial governments, recognizes recipients who have achieved excellence in their respective fields. Across Canada, there are many deserving individuals and groups working on emergency management, such as community-based volunteers, people working in all levels of government in emergency management organizations, and Indigenous communities.

The deadline to submit all nominations is Monday, June 1, 2026, at 2:59 am (Eastern Time).

To nominate someone, you must complete and submit both the [nominator](#) and [nominee](#) forms. Nominations should highlight achievements or initiatives from the past two calendar years. This requirement is waived for Outstanding Contribution to Emergency Management nominations.

For more information, please visit the [award website](#).



Store your **cannabis** out of reach and locked away.

Accidental poisonings in children from edible cannabis can be life threatening.

Practicing Safer Cannabis Storage



Click on the image, pictured left. It will take you to a toolkit about cannabis and children.



Indigenous Services Canada, Ontario Region is pleased to invite First Nations leadership from across Ontario to the eighth annual Joint Gathering on **October 28 and 29, 2026**, at the Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel and Conference Centre.

The Joint Gathering brings leadership from First Nations, Canada, and Ontario together to strengthen relationships and work towards joint priorities.

To support the development of a 2026 agenda that reflects your interests, we respectfully request that you complete [this survey](#) by **May 15, 2026**.

Information regarding registration and sponsorship will follow. We look forward to hearing from you!



Help is Here Whenever You Need It

Support is available 24/7 for all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Please find a list of mental health helplines below that are able to provide culturally relevant support. To find more services and resources, [visit the national Indigenous mental health page](#).



Hope for Wellness Helpline

Phone: 1-855-242-3310

Online chat: www.hopeforwellness.ca

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Support Line

Phone: 1-844-413-6649

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

Phone: 1-866-925-4419

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Services

Phone: 9-8-8 (call or text)