

HALTON REGION PUBLIC HEALTH • Office of the Medical Officer of Health

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TO: Halton Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Emergency Departments, other Healthcare Providers

FROM: Dr. Joanna Oda, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: February 14, 2024

RE: Measles Update – Prepare for increased risk of measles

QUICK FACTS

- There has been an increased number of measles outbreaks occurring globally. In Ontario, there have been 9 confirmed cases of measles between January 2023 and February 2024.
- Peel Public Health is currently investigating a [confirmed case of measles](#) in a child with a recent history of international travel.
- There have been no cases of measles in Halton, but between 2022 and 2023 Halton Region Public Health investigated 19 individuals who were contacts of confirmed measles cases.
- Cases of measles in Canada are usually unvaccinated or under-vaccinated people who were infected while travelling.
- In order to facilitate timely testing, ensure specimen collection supplies, including viral swabs, are readily available.

KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Measles is a highly transmissible, airborne virus. Symptoms include fever, cough, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis, followed by a maculopapular rash 3-5 days later. The rash usually begins on the face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet.
- Consider measles in the differential diagnoses particularly in returning travellers with respiratory symptoms.
- Do not wait for lab confirmation. Immediately report any suspected or confirmed measles cases to Public Health by calling **311 or 905-825- 6000**. If you suspect measles in a patient, call Public Health to facilitate the transport of samples to the Public Health Ontario (PHO) laboratory in Toronto for timely testing.
- **Diagnostic Testing:**
 - Patients with suspected measles should be promptly isolated in a single room with negative air flow. If this is not possible, the patient should wear a mask, be assessed at the end of the day and placed in a single room with the door closed upon arrival. After patient assessment, do not use the exam room until at least two hours have elapsed. Advise the patient to self-isolate. Refer to [PHO-Measles-Infection Prevention and Control Practices](#) for details.
 - Laboratory requisition should indicate STAT testing and must include travel history and vaccination status.
 - Recommended samples for acute measles infection are:
 - Nasopharyngeal or throat swab PCR (within seven days of rash onset)
 - **AND** urine PCR (within 14 days of rash onset)
 - Refer to [PHO Measles-Diagnostic-PCR](#) for testing details
 - Serology testing is **not** recommended for diagnosing acute infection. Refer to [PHO Measles-Serology](#) for details.

- To ensure timely diagnosis, clinical and public health management of measles, specimen collection supplies, including viral swabs, must be readily available.
- To order appropriate specimen collection supplies, use the Public Health Ontario Laboratory (PHOL) [Requisition for Specimen Containers and Supplies](#). See [PHOL Kit and Test Ordering Instructions](#) for more information.
- **Measles Immunization:**
 - Efficacy of a single dose of measles vaccine, given at 12 or 15 months of age, is estimated to be 85% to 95% effective, and is almost 100% with a second dose.
 - All Ontarians are eligible for **one or two publicly funded doses** of measles-containing vaccine depending on their age and risk factors. Refer to the [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule for Ontario](#) for details on routine, high-risk and catch-up schedules.
 - Ensure all staff and healthcare providers in your office/clinic are up to date with either two doses of documented measles vaccination OR documented laboratory evidence of immunity. This also applies to staff members born prior to 1970. Health care workers without appropriate documentation will be excluded from work if deemed to be exposed to a confirmed measles case.
 - Ensure patients are up to date with measles vaccination and that patients have reported vaccinations to Public Health.
 - For non-healthcare workers, if immunization status is unclear, vaccination is preferred over serology. Refer to [PHO Measles-Serology](#) for details.
 - Vaccines can be ordered from Halton Region Public Health through the online [Vaccine Order Form](#).

KEY MESSAGES FOR PATIENTS

- The best way to prevent measles and many other vaccine preventable diseases is by staying up-to-date on all immunizations, especially prior to any travel.
- Report any measles vaccination received to your local Public Health unit (halton.ca/immunize).
- Measles vaccination is required for school attendance in Ontario.
- Information about measles vaccination is available on the Halton Region website at [Halton - Measles, Mumps, Rubella \(MMR\) Vaccine](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. [Testing indications for measles. Public Health Ontario, September 26, 2023](#)
2. [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario June 2022, Ontario](#)
3. [Measles vaccines: Canadian Immunization Guide](#)

Please report all suspected/confirmed cases of [Diseases of Public Health Significance](#) (only report COVID-19 cases occurring in high-risk settings) to Public Health immediately by calling 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

PLEASE PROVIDE A COPY TO ALL PHYSICIANS IN YOUR OFFICE AND/OR POST IN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS AND PHYSICIAN LOUNGES. IF YOU HAVE ANY ISSUES WITH THIS ATTACHMENT, PLEASE EMAIL DOCTORS@HALTON.CA.