

## 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. Deepika Lobo, Associate Medical Officer of Health

DATE: February 23, 2023

RE: Measles cases reported in Ontario - Prepare for increased risk of measles

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### QUICK FACTS

- Two travel related measles cases have been recently reported in Ontario.
- Measles cases are increasing globally while measles vaccination coverage for both 1st and 2nd doses has dropped.
- Consider measles in the differential diagnoses particularly in returning travellers with respiratory symptoms.
- Ensure all staff 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.
- 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.

### 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 (rash usually begins on the face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet).
- **Diagnostic testing:**
  - If you suspect measles in a patient, **call Public Health (311 or 905-825- 6000)** to help facilitate the transport of samples to Public Health Ontario (PHO) laboratory in Toronto for timely testing.
  - Whenever possible, suspect measles patients should be assessed at the end of the day and placed in a separate room upon arrival. After patient assessment, do not use the exam room until at least two hours have elapsed. Advise the patient to self-isolate.
  - 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 PHO [measles-diagnostic-PCR](#) for testing details

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](mailto:DOCTORS@HALTON.CA).

- Serology testing is not recommended for diagnosing acute infection but can be done to determine immune status. Refer PHO [measles-serology](#) for details.

- **Measles Immunization**

- Ensure staff and patients are up to date with measles vaccination or documented immunity. Health care workers without appropriate documentation will be excluded from work if deemed to be exposed to a measles case.
- All Ontarians are eligible for **one or two publicly funded doses** of measles-containing vaccine depending on their age, risk factors, and healthcare provider's clinical judgment. Refer to the [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule for Ontario](#) and the most recent [NACI statement](#).
- Vaccination is preferred over serology in cases where immunization status is unclear.
- Vaccine 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 being 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](http://halton.ca/immunize)).
- 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, July 2020](#)
2. [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario June 2022, Ontario](#)
3. [Measles vaccine: Canadian Immunization Guide](#)