

November 6, 2013

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff:

Re: Measles in Alberta

Cases of measles have been confirmed in Southern Alberta, where an outbreak has been ongoing since October 18, 2013. Measles is an extremely contagious illness, spread easily through the air. Disease tends to be more severe in infants and young children, and can be life-threatening. Individuals who have NOT already received two doses of measles vaccine, or who have NOT had lab-confirmed measles in the past, may be at risk. To protect you and your children from illness, and help prevent further spread of this disease, Alberta Health Services would like to make you aware of the following:

PREVENTION:

1. Immunization: Immunization is the only means of protecting yourself, and your children, from measles disease.

- Children in Alberta are routinely offered their first dose of measles-containing vaccine (called Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine) at 12 months of age, and their second dose between the ages of four and six years
- Both doses are required to be fully protected
- Vaccine is offered free of charge, through Alberta's Routine Childhood Immunization Program
- Albertans uncertain about their immunization history can call their local public health office or Health Link Alberta (1.866.408.5465) to discuss immunization needs.

2. If exposed to measles: Individuals who have not been vaccinated, or who have not previously had measles, can develop measles disease within 7 to 21 days of exposure to a contagious case. If your child is not vaccinated, and has been exposed to a known case of measles, please keep your child home for 21 days following this exposure, isolating your child from all activities, including school attendance. This helps to prevent the further spread of this extremely contagious illness.

MEASLES ILLNESS:

If you or your children develop any of the symptoms listed below, think you might be sick with measles, or, think you might have been exposed to measles, please do NOT visit any clinic, hospital, doctor or Emergency Department. Instead, stay home, avoid all contact with others, and call Health Link Alberta at 1.866.408.5465, before you visit any clinic, doctor or hospital. This will help reduce the potential risk of spreading the disease to others.

Symptoms of Measles:

- Fever (38.3 C or higher)
- Cough, runny nose or red eyes.
- Red blotchy rash appearing 3 to 7 days after the fever starts, beginning on the face and spreading down to the body.

For more information on measles, please call Health Link Alberta, 24/7, at 1.866.408.5465, or visit the Alberta Health Services Website at www.albertahealthservices.ca and click on "Measles Outbreak" under Quick Links.

Sincerely,



Christopher Sikora, MD MPH MSc CCFP FRCP(C)
Lead Medical Officer of Health – Edmonton Zone