

For Immediate Release | June 4, 2014

Make sure measles immunizations are up to date

Interior Health's Medical Health Officer would like to remind the public to make sure their immunizations are up to date. The Interior Health region has recently had one confirmed measles case in a travelling Alberta resident who became ill and was diagnosed in Penticton. Communities in the Fraser Health region and Alberta have experienced large measles outbreaks this spring.

"So far in Interior Health we have only had one recent measles case, but that can change at any time especially with the increase in measles activity that we have seen in other parts of B.C. and Canada," said Dr. Parker, Medical Health Officer. "Measles is a potentially severe illness caused by a virus and it is very contagious. The best way to prevent a measles outbreak here is by making sure our immunization rates are high."

Those born before 1970 are considered immune, as measles exposure in childhood was quite common in the decades prior to routine immunization.

But for those born after 1970, the only protection against measles is immunization. It takes two doses of a measles vaccine (MMR) to protect against measles. In B.C., children routinely receive two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella vaccine (MMR) at 12 months of age and upon starting kindergarten, unless families have chosen not to immunize. Those who received only one dose are not considered to be immune. It is very important to verify that two doses of the vaccine have been received. This can be done by checking your immunization record. If you are not sure how to access your immunization record visit [ImmunizeBC \(http://www.immunizebc.ca/questions-answer/how-do-i-get-proof-my-immunity-or-where-can-i-find-my-immunization-record\)](http://www.immunizebc.ca/questions-answer/how-do-i-get-proof-my-immunity-or-where-can-i-find-my-immunization-record) or contact your local public health centre.

Measles spreads easily through the air and can be passed on to others by an infectious person for one to two days before symptoms develop and up to four days after rash onset. Symptoms of measles include fever, cough, runny nose, and red and inflamed eyes (conjunctivitis). These are followed by a rash, which starts first on the face and neck, spreads to the chest, arms, and legs, and often lasts up to a week.

When a measles case is identified, public health staff contact all those who may have been exposed to the virus to assess their risk and provide immunization when needed. They also advise those who may have measles to take measures to reduce the spread to others.

"When someone is experiencing measles symptoms, or if they have been in contact with someone who has measles, it is very important that they stay away from others to prevent spreading the disease," added Dr. Parker. "If a person suspects they may have measles and they need to go to the hospital, emergency room or a doctor's office, we advise them to call ahead first, so health-care staff can take measures to isolate the patient as they come in and avoid exposing others in waiting rooms to a potentially infectious disease."

If you have any questions about measles, please call HealthLink BC by dialling 8-1-1. If you need to make an appointment for immunization, contact your local public health centre.

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For more information:

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/mini/hw198187.html#hw198189>.