

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM PUBLIC HEALTH: Your Child's Immunization during a Disease Outbreak**

For school attendance, parents are required by law to provide proof of their child's immunization to Public Health. To find out what vaccines are required and if your child's immunization records are up-to-date, please call the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit. You can also book an immunization appointment.

If you've chosen not to immunize your child, you must have a notarized statement of medical exemption or a statement of conscious/religious belief on file with Public Health. Please contact us to arrange for your child's exemption to be on file if you have not already done so.

If there is an outbreak of disease in your child's school and his/her immunization record is not up-to-date with Public Health, or you have an exemption on file, your child will not be allowed to attend school for the entire duration of the outbreak.

As you may be aware, Measles cases have recently been identified in Ontario, Quebec, and Manitoba. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care was advised on February 16, 2015 of a confirmed case of measles in a person who attended the "Acquire the Fire" event, a mass gathering of youth that was held in Toronto, at Queensway Cathedral on February 6 and 7, 2015. If your child attended this event, please contact Chatham-Kent Public Health.

A Measles factsheet has been provided for your convenience.

Sincerely,



W. David Colby, Msc, MD, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health  
Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit

# Measles

Measles is a viral disease that is one of the most easily spread infectious diseases. Since the introduction of vaccine, measles has dropped by as much as 99% in developed countries. Most cases in Ontario are travel related and are most common among unimmunized and/or under immunized children and adults.

## How is Measles transmitted?

It is highly contagious and is spread through the air, close or direct contact with respiratory secretions, as well as through articles of clothing/bedding with infectious discharge present. Measles can remain contagious in the air and on infected surfaces for up to two hours.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Measles?

Symptoms of measles include:

- Fever, cough and runny nose
- Red, irritated eyes and light sensitivity
- Small white/grey/blue spots in the mouth
- Red, blotchy rash, which is the last symptom to appear. The rash appears on the face and then spreads down over the body, and will begin to fade after about a week.

Symptoms can start anywhere from 7 to 21 days after a person has been exposed to the virus. Symptoms usually develop around 10 days after exposure and the rash usually develops 14 days after exposure.

## How long is Measles contagious for?

Measles are usually contagious for about four days before the rash to four days after the rash develops. After an infection, immunity is generally life long.

## How is Measles diagnosed and treated?

Measles can be diagnosed through blood work or a swab. There is no specific treatment for measles, only supportive measures to make the person comfortable as they recover.

## How can Measles be prevented?

Immunization. Two doses of measles vaccine are given to children after their first birthday to provide optimal protection. Measles vaccine is given in combination with other vaccines. MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine should be administered at 12

months of age and the second dose should be given as MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella, varicella) between four to six years of age, preferably prior to school entry.

Other groups who should receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine include:

- Young adults (18 to 25 years of age)
- Post-secondary students
- Persons who received killed vaccine previously (born between 1967 to 1970)
- Health care workers
- Persons in the military
- Those who plan to travel internationally

Adults born in 1970 or later without evidence of immunity should receive one dose of MMR.

The following are considered adequately protected:

- Canadian born persons born prior to 1970 – this is because it is presumed most people born before 1970 would have acquired natural immunity to measles.
- Persons with a history of laboratory-confirmed infection.

Measles vaccine should not be given to pregnant women or people with immune system problems.

### **What to do if you are exposed to Measles?**

If you have been exposed and are not protected, a vaccine can prevent measles from developing if it is given within 72 hours (three days) of exposure. These individuals should contact their health care provider, or the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit – Clinic Services, at the number listed below as soon as possible.

Pregnant women who are not protected, individuals who have problems with their immune system and are not protected, and infants under six (6) months of age can be treated with another medication up to six (6) days after exposure. These individuals should contact their health care provider **and** the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit – Clinic Services, at the number listed below as soon as possible.

### **If you develop symptoms:**

- Stay home and do not have others visit for at least four (4) days after the rash starts;
- Contact the Health Unit at the phone number listed below;
- Contact your health care provider by phone. Please note: If you need to visit a healthcare provider, call first and tell them you have measles symptoms. Visit the healthcare provider at the end of the day unless this is not practical or possible for medical reasons. On arrival, immediately ask for a mask when you enter the office/clinic, and to be placed in a private room. If this is not possible, wait in your car until you are seen by the healthcare provider;
- If your health care provider suspects measles, they should notify the Health Unit at the phone number listed below.

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**Grand Office**  
435 Grand Ave. W., Chatham ON N7M 5L8  
tel: 519.352.7270 fax: 519.352.2166

**Clinic Services**  
177 King St. E., Chatham ON N7M 3N1  
tel: 519.355.1071 fax: 519.355.0848