



**Office of the  
Chief Medical  
Health Officer**

February 20, 2019

**Measles Update**

There has been a recent outbreak of measles in the school setting in Vancouver, BC, as well as reports of measles in Washington state affecting school-age children. This has increased interest in measles and MMR vaccination from patients on Vancouver Island, as well as raised the possibility of measles transmission in our communities. To date, we have not had any confirmed cases of measles in Island Health related to the Vancouver or Washington outbreaks, nor any other isolated cases. We are not monitoring any contacts that had known exposures to cases in either settings.

We ask that physicians remain vigilant for clinical cases of measles. Measles initially presents with a fever, cough, runny nose, and conjunctivitis, which is then followed a few days later by a red maculopapular rash. The rash begins in the hairline and spreads rapidly to the face, trunk and limbs. Koplik spots, if present, fade as the rash appears.

If you suspect that you have a patient presenting with measles, please immediately notify the Communicable Disease Unit or Medical Health Officer (After hours: 1-800-204-6166) and take the following steps:

- 1) Promptly isolate patients with suspect measles. Measles is airborne and highly infectious. To protect others in the office, please provide the patient with potential measles with a surgical mask and place them in a private room immediately. Importantly, the exam room should not be used for two hours after the patient has left. Suspect cases will need to stay isolated at home until four days after rash onset.
- 2) To confirm the diagnosis, please collect a viral nasopharyngeal or throat swab (using a COPAN red top swab) and collect a urine sample for measles virus detection. Collection of blood for serologic testing is also advised (request testing of measles IgG and IgM; mark as 'ACUTE measles'). Advise the patient that if attending a lab, the lab should be advised in advance and the patient should wear a mask at all times.

Please take this opportunity to immunize against measles. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended for patients born after January 1, 1970; those born before that date are considered to be immune. Health care workers born between 1957 and 1969 are recommended to have two doses of MMR vaccine. It is safe to immunize patients who are uncertain about their measles immunization history. MMR vaccine can be ordered through your local health unit or you may refer to immunizing pharmacists (adults and children over 5 years) and public health units (children).

We are not currently recommending early vaccination of children aged 6-12 months or an early second dose (prior to 4 years of age) for children who have had one dose and are under 4 years of age.

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**After Hours On Call**

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