

Measles Outbreak in Vancouver

We are currently experiencing a measles outbreak in Vancouver. At this time, 7 lab-confirmed and 3 epidemiologically linked clinical cases of measles have been identified. While most affected cases are among students who attend three French schools in Vancouver, 2 secondary adult cases residing in Fraser Health have been identified. Other residents of VCH and Fraser Health may have been exposed to the disease in a variety of public locations between January 17th and February 22nd.

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.

Please take this opportunity to immunize against measles. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended for individuals born after January 1, 1970; those born before that date are considered to be immune. Health care workers born between 1957 and 1969 are also recommended to have two doses of MMR vaccine. Individuals with an uncertain immunization history may also be immunized.

At this time, there are no changes to the measles immunization schedule for children. We appreciate that pharmacists do not immunize young children. However, as you may receive questions about children, please note, our recommendations have not changed. Infants should be offered MMR vaccine starting with their first birthday. We are not currently recommending early vaccination of children aged 6-12 months. Nor does the second dose of MMR vaccine, targeted for children 4-6 years need to be given early. This recommendation could change if we see wider transmission in our community.

Ordering MMR vaccine: Publicly-funded MMR vaccine is available from the same VCH Community Health Centre (CHC) which fills your routine vaccine orders.

MMR vaccine administration: This is a live attenuated vaccine that should not be offered to pregnant women or those with immune compromising conditions. Vaccine should be administered subcutaneously in the lateral aspect of the upper arm. For a refresher on this vaccine, please review the provincial immunization manual, part IV, biological products.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer in Vancouver at 604.675.3900

Vancouver Medical Health Officers

Dr. Patricia Daly (Chief Medical Health Officer)

Dr. Réka Gustafson, Dr. John Harding, Dr. James Lu, Dr. Emily Newhouse