



Community Medicine Newsletter

MEASLES EXPOSURE AT VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

On August 15th, an infectious passenger with measles passed through YVR to Edmonton from Seoul, spending two or three hours in transit in the terminal. People may have been exposed on either flight or while sharing the same airspace at the airport.

The case travelled on the following flights:

Korean Airlines flight # KE071 left Seoul, South Korea on 15 Aug 2011 @ approx 1900-1930 hrs, arrived in Vancouver at approx 1330-1430 on 15 Aug 2011.

Air Canada flight # AC244 left Vancouver on 15 Aug 2011 @ approx 1630 hrs for Edmonton.

Measles is highly infectious via the airborne route. Being in the same room, even after the infectious person has been gone for several hours, is sufficient for exposure to occur. The measles incubation period is usually 8 to 12 days but can be as long as 18 days. In this situation, symptoms could develop as late as September 2nd.

Symptoms usually include a cough, runny nose, red eyes, and a fever for three days, followed by a rash starting on the face and extending to the entire body. Some people are more seriously ill and require hospitalization.

Measles is now a travel disease here. A large outbreak occurred in Québec this year triggered by a case from France, and an outbreak of about 80 cases occurred in BC in 2010 during the Winter Olympic Game period, presumably initiated by one or two sick visitors.

Those most likely to develop measles after this exposure are babies under 1 year old and others not immunized. While vaccine or immunoglobulin may be effective as post-exposure prevention they must be given within a few days of exposure.

If you suspect a patient has measles, please take appropriate infection control precautions and contact VCH Communicable Disease Control (604-983-6700) during business hours or the on-call Medical Health Officer (604-527-4893).

For measles diagnosis, please collect viral specimens using a nasopharyngeal or throat viral swab, and a sterile urine specimen. Serology for measles IgM and IgG is also recommended. If immediate transport of viral specimens is not feasible, please store in a refrigerator and transport to the laboratory on ice within 24 hours.

If you require further information, please contact the CD Nurse on call at 604-983-6700.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. O'Connor".

Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc

Medical Health Officer

Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore