

Community Medicine Newsletter

MEASLES ADVISORY

Three cases of locally acquired measles diagnosed in residents of the North Shore and Bowen Island. These are the first cases of locally acquired measles since 2010.

The three cases are linked, indicating that we do not yet have sustained transmission in the community. However, since measles is highly contagious, additional cases may present in the coming days and weeks.

Those most likely to be infected are children and adults, born after 1970, who are unimmunized.

Although much less likely, older adults or those who received only one dose of measles vaccine can also get measles. Measles in people who have had two doses of measles vaccine is rare.

Please increase your index of suspicion if you see a patient presenting with symptoms compatible with measles. These include fever, cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis and a red maculopapular rash. The rash starts on the 3rd or 4th day of illness, initially in the hairline, but spreads rapidly to the face, trunk and limbs. The pathognomonic Koplik spots look like grains of salt on a red inflamed background on the mucosa of the cheek next to the upper premolars and molars. They fade as the rash appears. Complications of measles include pneumonitis, secondary bacterial infections including pneumonia, otitis media and encephalitis.

If you suspect measles, please collect a throat swab and/or urine for measles virus isolation and blood for serologic testing (measles IgG and IgM). Physicians who suspect measles are asked to call VCH Communicable Disease Control at (604) 675-3900, while the patient is still in the office, to initiate immediate public health follow-up. After office hours please call 604-527-4893, and ask for the Medical Health Officer on-call.

If a patient presents with a history of fever and rash, please ask them to wear a surgical mask, and place them in a private room as soon as possible to protect other patients in your office.

Children in BC routinely received two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella vaccine (MMR) at 12 and 18 months. The routine immunization schedule changed recently, and the MMR booster is now offered at ages 4-6. Adults born before 1970 are considered to have natural immunity to measles, although a small proportion of adults born before 1970 may also be susceptible. A free dose of MMR can be provided to any adult or child over one year of age who has uncertain immunization or disease history. Please also ensure that you and your office staff are up-to-date with MMR vaccination. Health care workers born after 1956 should receive 2 doses of MMR.

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions or concerns, please call public health at 604-675-3900.

Sincerely,



Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc
Medical Health Officer

Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore



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