

May 14, 2010

Additional measles cases confirmed in Calgary-area; Vaccination key to preventing further spread

CALGARY – Alberta Health Services has confirmed four new cases of measles in the Calgary-area and is following-up directly with individuals who may have been in close contact with the confirmed cases.

Including these four new cases, Alberta Health Services (AHS) has now confirmed five cases of measles disease in the Calgary-area in the past two weeks. In 2009, only one case of measles was confirmed provincewide.

“Clearly, we are seeing a higher than average number of measles cases in Alberta at this time,” says Dr. Gerry Predy, AHS Medical Officer of Health. “Although we are currently seeing this increase in the Calgary-area, measles is a highly contagious disease and we must be proactive to prevent further spread. We strongly encourage all Albertans to ensure they are up to date with all immunizations, including the MMR Vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps and rubella.”

Albertans are also reminded to monitor their health for symptoms of measles disease. If symptoms develop, individuals are requested to contact HealthLink Alberta immediately, and to avoid all contact with others.

Symptoms of measles include fever, cough, runny nose or red eyes, and a red blotchy rash that appears three to seven days after fever starts. The rash typically begins behind the ears and on the face, spreading down to the body, and finally to the arms and legs.

As an airborne disease, measles is extremely contagious. Individuals who have **not** already had measles disease or have **not** been vaccinated against measles are at highest risk for developing the disease. The MMR Vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps and rubella, is part of the routine Childhood Immunization Program in Alberta. Children in Alberta typically receive their first dose of MMR Vaccine at 12 months of age and their second dose between the ages of four and six years. Both doses are required to be fully protected.

To book MMR vaccinations, call your local Community Health Centre or Public Health Office. For more information about measles and MMR vaccine, call HealthLink Alberta – in the Calgary-area at 403.943.LINK (5465); in the Edmonton-area at 780.408.LINK (5465) or, outside the local calling area, toll-free at 1.866.408.LINK (5465).

See attached backgrounder for additional measles information.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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