

# Memorandum

Date: April 10, 2025

To: Continuing Care, Home and Community Care, Palliative and End of Life Care staff

From: Dr. James Silvius, Provincial Medical Director, Seniors Health & Continuing Care

RE: Measles in Alberta

Please read this information carefully and share with your staff.

## **Protection via Immunization:**

It is strongly recommended that anyone who works with patients, residents or clients ensure they are immune to measles to help keep people healthy, lower the risk of disruption to the health service, and lower the risk to the community.

Measles cases are increasing globally, with numerous countries and travel destinations reporting outbreaks. Cases have been identified in several Canadian provinces, including clusters of cases recently identified in Alberta.

Measles is an extremely contagious disease and is spread easily through the air. You can get measles just by passing through a room or location where an infected person was present during the previous two hours. Measles can spread starting four days before the rash appears until four days after the rash appears. Measles can be life-threatening.

## **Possible complications from measles:**

- About one in three persons with measles will have one or more complications, including:
  - diarrhea
  - ear infections (which can lead to permanent hearing loss)
  - pneumonia
  - encephalitis (inflammation of the brain)
  - seizures.
- A very rare, but fatal disease of the brain and spinal cord can also develop months to years after a measles infection called sub-acute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE).
- Complications are more common among children under five years of age and those who are pregnant or with weak immune systems.

## **All staff are encouraged to:**

- **Check immunization records:** It is strongly recommended that anyone who works with patients or clients ensure they are immune to measles. All healthcare workers, regardless of year of birth, are recommended to have 2 lifetime doses of measles-containing vaccine at least 4 weeks apart, OR

- A documented laboratory-confirmed measles infection in the past, OR
- A blood test showing proof of immunity, NOTE: testing for antibodies to determine immunity is not routinely recommended.
- **Get immunized.** To book an appointment, call 811 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. if you live in the Calgary or Edmonton Zone. If you live in another zone in Alberta, contact your local [public health or community health centre](#).
- **Monitor for [measles symptoms](#):** fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and rash  
**If you have symptoms of measles, stay at home, avoid contact with others, and call Health Link at 811** before visiting any hospital, clinic, or healthcare provider.  
**Notify your manager and Infection Prevention and Control lead if you have symptoms of measles.**

#### **Symptoms of measles include:**

- fever of 38.3°C or higher; and
- cough, runny nose, or red eyes; and
- a rash that appears three to seven days after fever starts, usually beginning behind the ears and on the face and spreading down to the body and then to the arms and legs. The rash appears red and blotchy on lighter skin colours. On darker skin colours, it can appear purple or darker than the skin around it, or it might be hard to see. [View measles rash images](#).

Those who have received fewer than two doses of measles-containing vaccine AND are pregnant, and/or have a weakened immune system are at highest risk of complications from measles. These people **should contact Health Link at 811 promptly if exposed to measles** as they may be eligible for vaccine or immune globulin to reduce the risk of getting measles.

#### **Safe and highly effective vaccine:**

Measles vaccine is safe and highly effective at stopping infection and complications. Healthcare workers who have received fewer than two doses of measles-containing vaccine are at risk of infection. In Alberta, measles vaccine is offered, free of charge, through Alberta's publicly funded immunization program. Children in Alberta typically receive their first dose of measles vaccine at 12 months of age, and their second dose at 18 months of age. If you have not had two doses, call the Immunization Booking Line at 811 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. if you live in the Calgary or Edmonton Zone. If you live in another zone in Alberta, contact your local [public health or community health centre](#) to get protected.

#### **Resources for healthcare providers:**

- [Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning in Public Facilities](#) (Note: respiratory cleaning appropriate for measles)
- [Laboratory Testing for Suspected Measles](#) (APL bulletin)
- [Measles: Learn About Measles, Who is at Risk, & How It Spreads.](#)
- [Poster - Measles Immunization](#)
- [ahs.ca/measles](https://ahs.ca/measles)
- [Measles | Alberta.ca](#)