
Messaging for General Update + Audio Distribution

Measles is here in Alberta. It is also around the world, including the United States and Mexico.

What is Measles

Measles is a sickness that is very easy to spread. It spreads through the air that we breathe when someone who has measles breathes, coughs, sings or sneezes. Some people can become very sick from measles, and sometimes, they can die.

Signs of measles can be:

- Fever of 38.3° C or higher
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red eyes
- A rash that appears 3 to 7 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.

Signs can start 8 to 12 days after being around measles, but sometimes it can take up to 21 days. Measles can cause other problems like ear infections, deafness, lung infections (pneumonia), seizures and brain damage from swelling of the brain. It can be worse for young children, pregnant women, and people with weak immune systems.

If a person has had measles, it keeps them safe from having measles again, but it can make your immune system weak against other sicknesses.

If you or your child have any signs of measles, stay home. If you have a rash, stay home for four full days after the rash has started. Stay away from other people so you don't get them sick. Call Health Link at 811 before going to a doctor or hospital.

How to Stay Safe from Measles

The best way to keep yourself and your family safe is the measles vaccine. The measles vaccine works very well and is safe. In Alberta, the vaccine is free.

- **If you are born before 1970**, you have likely had measles and are generally considered immune or safe from measles.
 - **If you were born in 1970 or later**, you need **two needles** of the measles vaccine to be safe.
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- **If you are travelling to, or live in areas where measles is spreading, inside or outside of Canada or Alberta,** it is recommended that you get an additional needle to be safe. In these areas:
 - Babies who are six months, up to and including, 11 months old, should get an early dose of vaccine. They should also still receive their routine two doses after they reach one year of age.
 - Adults born before 1970, who have not had any doses of measles vaccine, can discuss getting a single needle with their healthcare provider.

If you are exposed to measles, you will need to give a record of having had two needles of the measles vaccine or a blood test showing you are immune or safe from measles or you may be asked to stay home to keep others safe until you are no longer at risk of making others sick.

If you already have these records, from the measles vaccine or blood test, you can bring them to your local health unit. If you don't have these records but know you've had measles before or needles for measles, you can ask your family doctor to order a blood test.

Having record of having had measles disease or measles vaccine will help keep you safe from disease and from being asked to stay home if exposed again in the future.

Easter will soon be here and often this is when people have gatherings and travel to visit family and friends. It is important to know that measles is in many places and may be where you are traveling to. When coming back home from travelling, watch for signs of measles in your family.

If you or your children have not had the needle for measles vaccine, or if you are not sure about what needles you have had, please call Health Link at **811** or your local health unit.