



Population and Public Health
Office of the Medical Health Officers
204-310 Idylwyld Drive North
SASKATOON SK S7L 0Z2

Tel: 306.655.4338
Fax: 306.655.4474

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Dear Physician, Nurse Practitioners & Health Care Workers:

Measles outbreak in Southern Alberta

A measles outbreak has been declared in Southern Alberta with the index case reportedly being from Lethbridge Alberta. Low immunization rates reported in southern Alberta have assisted in the quick spread of measles locally and there is anticipation of more cases.

Measles is an acute viral infection. Transmission is by airborne droplets, direct person-to-person contact with secretions, and indirect contact with contaminated articles.

Measles is highly contagious from 1 to 2 days before the start of the prodromal phase until 4 days after the appearance of the rash and may include:

- Prodromal phase lasting about 2 to 4 days:
 - Fever of 38.3 C or greater
 - **Cough, coryza or conjunctivitis (the Classic 3 C's)**
 - Koplik's spots on the buccal mucosa appearing 1 to 2 days before the rash.
- Generalized maculopapular rash appearing on days 3 to 5 and usually lasting for 4 to 7 days. Rash begins behind the ears and on to the face. Then it gradually spreads to the trunk and the extremities.
- Other symptoms may include anorexia, diarrhea (especially in infants), and generalized lymphadenopathy.

If you suspect a patient has measles:

- Provide a separate waiting area away from other patients and provide patient with a surgical mask.
- Test for measles, parvovirus, varicella and rubella (as there are other circulating viral causes of rashes) by submitting the following specimens:
 - **Serology:** IgM and IgG antibody for all four diseases ("rash panel")
 - **Nasopharyngeal or throat swab:** place in 2-3 mL viral transport medium (within 4 days of rash onset)
 - **Urine:** minimum 50 mL in sterile container (within 7 days of rash onset)
- Clearly mark laboratory requisitions "**suspect case of measles**" to facilitate rapid testing. Include information regarding symptoms and onset on all requisitions.
- Call Communicable Disease Control, Population & Public Health Services at 306-655-4612 to report suspected cases.
- Exclude diagnosed or suspected measles case from daycare, school or workplace for 4 days after appearance of the rash.

Measles containing vaccine is routinely given to children at 12 & 18 months (2 doses of measles vaccine needs to be given after 12 months of age to be considered complete). Patients who have infants between the ages of 6 – 12 months can purchase the vaccine if travelling to an area with a measles outbreak, such as Lethbridge, by calling their local public health office for an appointment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shovita Padhi
MD, MPH, FRCPC
Deputy Medical Health Officer