

Measles Preparedness

Update to York Region health care providers as of February 24, 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted immunization coverage for all vaccine preventable diseases across all ages, including measles. On February 8, 2023, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) released a [statement](#) on the increased risk of measles globally due to a decrease in measles immunization coverage related to the pandemic.

Consider measles in your differential diagnosis when assessing patients with risk factors and compatible symptoms

With an anticipated busy travel period over March break and reduced border measures, there is a potential for increased measles activity. Please consider measles when assessing patients, especially those who are unvaccinated, have a recent travel history and present with signs and symptoms of measles including:

- Fever, cough, runny nose and conjunctivitis
- Small red spots in the mouth with white or bluish-white centers (Koplik spots)
- Dusky red, blotchy rash that begins on the face and spreads all over the body
- Rash begins on the third to the seventh day of illness and lasts four to seven days

Suspected measles cases should be tested and reported to Public Health

It is important to test and follow specific specimen collection requirements for any suspect cases of measles with your patients:

- Follow [Provincial guidance](#) on specimen collection and handling
- At a minimum, please collect urine **AND** nasopharyngeal swab for PCR testing

To expedite the processing of specimens, please call York Region Public Health at 905-830-4444 ext. 73588, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or after hours at 905-953-6478 to arrange transportation of specimens to the Public Health Ontario Laboratory in Toronto.

If you have a high degree of suspicion for a measles case, please contact York Region Public Health immediately

Measles is a reportable disease of public health significance under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#) (HPPA).

Please call us at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 73588 (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or 905-953-6478 after hours (before 8:30 a.m. and after 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday or 24 hours per day on weekends/holidays).

Important: Please inform your patient to isolate at home (after leaving your clinical setting/facility) and that public health will contact them with further direction and support.

Mitigating the risk of measles exposure in your clinical practice

Infection prevention and control measures

Patients with suspected measles should be **promptly isolated in a single room** with negative air flow (airborne infection isolation room or AIIR) and the door closed. If you do not have an AIIR, the patient should wear a surgical mask and be immediately placed in a single room with a closed door.

The measles virus can remain airborne for two hours and no other patient should be placed in the room for two hours (unless the air is changed). Patient movement should be limited unless absolutely required.

When the patient leaves your clinical facility, appropriate room cleaning and disinfection are required. Additional information on infection prevention and control measures may be found [here](#).

Staff immunity to measles

To minimize disruption to your practice and avoid potential work exclusions in the case of a measles exposure, **please ensure all your staff has documentation of immunity to measles readily accessible**. To mitigate transmission risk, only immune staff should care for a patient suspected of measles.

For more information on measles immunity criteria for health care workers, please refer to the [Canadian Immunization Guide](#).

Continue to promote and administer vaccinations across the lifespan

Thank you for your efforts in continuing to provide life saving vaccines.

Please also encourage parents/guardians to [report](#) their child's immunizations to Public Health so we have the most up to date coverage rates for York Region.

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