

Measles Preparedness

Update to York Region health professionals as of February 20, 2024

Increased risk of measles

Measles outbreaks are occurring in many regions of the world, including the United States and many parts of Europe. The [World Health Organization](#) recently warned of a dramatic rise in measles cases in 2023, with a trend accelerating in the last months of the year and continuing to rise.

Since January 2023, there have been 10 cases of measles reported in Ontario, four of which were reported in the past two months. With reports of recent travel-related measles cases in Ontario and anticipated busy travel periods over March break, our community has an increased risk of more measles cases.

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

Please consider measles when assessing patients, especially those who are unvaccinated, have a recent travel history, or present with the signs and symptoms compatible with measles including:

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

Patients with measles are infectious from one day before the prodromal period, which is usually about four days before rash onset, to four days after the onset of rash.

Suspected measles cases should be tested and reported to public health immediately

For any suspect cases of measles, it is important to test promptly and follow specific specimen collection instructions. Testing should include measles PCR and diagnostic serology.

- Order [measles PCR testing](#): Nasopharyngeal (NP)/throat swab AND urine specimen
- Order [measles serology](#) (IgM and IgG)
- 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 report it to York Region Public Health immediately. Measles is a reportable disease of public health significance under the *Health Promotion and Protection 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 AM or after 4:30 PM Monday to Friday or 24 hours per day on weekends/holidays)

Please instruct your patient to isolate at home after leaving your clinical facility and that public health will contact them with further direction and support.

Infection prevention and control measures to mitigate the risk of measles exposure

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

The measles virus can remain in the air for two hours. Therefore, no other patients should be placed in the same room for **two hours** afterwards. Patient movement should be limited unless absolutely required.

Room cleaning and disinfection are required when the patient leaves the clinical facility. An N95 respirator is not necessary for health professionals with documented immunity. Additional information on infection prevention and control measures can be found [here](#).

Promote immunization

Ensure **all** health care staff are up to date with either two doses of documented measles immunization **OR** documented laboratory evidence of immunity. Only immune staff should care for a patient suspected of measles.

Please support your patients in remaining up to date with all routine immunizations (including measles), especially in advance of any upcoming travel.

Measles vaccine may be given to infants aged six to 11 months if travelling to areas where measles is circulating; however, two additional doses of measles-containing vaccine must be administered after the child is 12 months old to ensure long-lasting immunity to measles. Please see the [Canadian Immunization Guide](#) for more information.

Encourage parents to [report](#) their children's immunizations to public health through the Immunization Connect Ontario Tool (ICON), so we have the most up-to-date information for York Region.

Thank you for your continued efforts to provide life saving vaccines.

Additional resources:

- [Measles Information for Clinicians \(Public Health Ontario\)](#)
- [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario](#)
- [Measles Serology Testing \(Public Health Ontario\)](#)
- [Measles PCR Testing \(Public Health Ontario\)](#)

- [Ordering Form for Specimen Collection Kits \(Public Health Ontario Laboratory\)](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control for Clinical Office Practice \(Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee\)](#)
- [Measles Fact Sheet for Patients](#)