

May 8, 2025

Re: Update on Measles in Manitoba - Awareness and Prevention

Dear Parents/Guardians, Staff and Volunteers:

Canada is now experiencing the largest measles outbreak since measles was declared eliminated in Canada in 1998. Outbreaks are also occurring in the USA and Mexico. Over 90% of recent cases in Canada are unimmunized or have unknown vaccination status.

In Manitoba, measles cases are beginning to increase, including through a recent school exposure. This information is being shared so you are aware of the current situation and can take steps to protect yourself and your family.

Measles Disease

Measles spreads very easily. **Someone with measles can spread it to others from four days before the rash begins (before they know they are sick) to four days after the rash appears.** If you have not received a measles-containing vaccine and have not had measles before, it is very likely you will become infected if exposed.

Early symptoms of measles include fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes, followed several days later by a red, blotchy rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. Measles can be very serious, especially for young children, pregnant people, and those with a weakened immune system. It can result in lung and brain infections and death.

Protect yourself and your child(ren)

Two doses of measles vaccine are almost 100% effective in preventing a measles infection. It is still possible for a small number of vaccinated people to get measles, but the infection is usually milder, and they are less likely to spread the disease to others.

All Manitobans born during or after 1985 can receive 2 doses of the measles vaccine for free. The full list of eligibility criteria for the measles vaccines in Manitoba can be found at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/vaccineeligibility.html>.

You can check your immunization records by contacting your health care provider, pharmacy, or local public health office or by submitting a request online: <https://forms.gov.mb.ca/immunization-update-request/>.

Protect your community if you think you have measles

If you think you or your child(ren) may have measles:

- Stay home and avoid contact with others.
- Contact your healthcare provider for further advice, and call ahead before visiting any healthcare facility to let them know you may have measles. This will allow them to take precautions, such as wearing a mask and putting you in a room right away to prevent exposing other people.
- After seeing a healthcare provider, stay home until you receive further advice. Your health care provider may test you for measles and will need to wait for results.
- **If you have a household member who is unimmunized, they should also stay home while you are waiting for test results. This is because they may already be infectious even if they do not have symptoms.**
- If your unimmunized household member doesn't have symptoms, they can choose to get a measles-containing vaccine right away. Getting the vaccine within 3 days of exposure may prevent them from getting a measles infection. If they are pregnant or a young baby, or have weakened immune systems, vaccine may not be recommended but they may be eligible for a preventative treatment if you are diagnosed with measles.
- You can also call Health Links – Info Santé (toll-free in Manitoba at 204-788-8200 in Winnipeg or 1-888-315-9257 outside Winnipeg) or talk to your health care provider for more information.

Protect your school community if exposed

- **Someone who has measles must isolate at home for four days after their rash begins.** After this time, they can resume regular activities once they feel well enough.
- If someone is not immunized and has been exposed to measles, follow Public Health's advice on how long to stay home to prevent further spread.
 - **You may need to stay home for at least three weeks after being exposed.** But this may be extended if more measles cases are identified in the school.
 - You can choose to receive a dose of measles vaccine. Some people may be able to return to school after they receive one dose of vaccine.
 - Anyone who has been excluded from school needs to remain home. Avoid public spaces, regular activities, and anyone who is at high risk of complications (e.g. pregnant women, infants, those with weakened immune systems).
- If someone is immunized for measles, they are very unlikely to get measles after being exposed, and can continue regular activities but should still monitor for symptoms.
- If you have not been immunized and know that you have been exposed to a case of measles through travel, visitors, or other exposures outside of school, you should also stay home for 3 weeks after being exposed to protect others in your community. Remember that you may already be infectious even if you do not have symptoms yet. You can call your local public health office for further advice.

Public exposures will be updated as they are identified on the Measles webpage:
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/diseases/measles.html>.

You can find your local public health office here:
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/offices.html>.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

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