



Hamilton

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Memo from Hamilton Public Health Services about Measles and March Break Travel

TO: Parents, Caregivers and Staff of Schools and Childcare Care Centres
FROM: Hamilton Public Health Services
DATE: March 18, 2024

For many families, March Break is a time for travel and fun, but with travel comes a heightened risk of getting a serious infection, such as measles. Eight cases of measles have been reported in Ontario since the start of the year, most of which have been linked to international travel. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a 79% increase in the number of global measles cases in 2023 compared to 2022.

Measles is a highly contagious virus that spreads easily to those who are not immunized. Infants under one year of age, unimmunized pregnant individuals, and people with weakened immune systems are at increased risk of complications. Infection can lead to severe complications, including deafness and brain damage caused by inflammation of the brain. Measles can be fatal. In addition to the risks to your own health and that of your family, if you become infected with measles while travelling you may spread to others upon your return to Canada, particularly vulnerable people who are unable to be vaccinated (e.g., young infants, pregnant people, and people with weakened immune systems).

Measles symptoms begin 7-21 days after infection and may include:

- High fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis, i.e., pink eye), sensitivity to light
- Red rash lasting 4-7 days

Have you recently returned from international travel?

Hamilton Public Health Services is advising all individuals, especially those returning from any international travel, to monitor themselves and their children for any signs and symptoms of measles. If you develop symptoms of measles while abroad or after you return to Canada:

- Limit contact with other people.
- Call your health care provider or a walk-in clinic and notify them about your symptoms before an in-person appointment, so they can take proper precautions. Wear a well-fitting respirator or medical mask when seeking care.

- Tell the health care provider where you have travelled and if you have been vaccinated against measles.

Hamilton Public Health Services is also advising individuals to ensure they are up to date with measles vaccination, especially ahead of any international travel.

Children receive two doses of measles vaccine as part of routine vaccination, one dose of MMR vaccine at 12 months, and a second dose of measles containing vaccine between 4-6 years. Infants 6-11 months may receive a dose of MMR if travelling outside of Canada (Note: Two additional doses of measles containing vaccine must be administered after 12 months of age to ensure long-lasting immunity).

Adults born in or after 1970 can receive two doses of MMR through their healthcare provider. Particularly those travelling outside Canada, post-secondary students and healthcare workers are recommended to receive two doses. Adults born before 1970 are generally considered immune to measles, but a dose of MMR vaccine is publicly funded through a healthcare provider for those travelling outside of Canada.

Vaccines for Travel

Consult with your health care provider about ensuring you are up to date on provincial routine vaccinations. It is best that this is done at least 6 weeks prior to planned travel to allow time to receive recommended vaccinations and for these vaccinations to have time to promote required immunity. A travel medicine consultation may be recommended depending on international destination.

Not sure what vaccines your child has received?

- Ensure that you maintain a complete vaccination history for all members of your family.
- If you suspect that some vaccinations have not been recorded in your personal record:
 - Reach out to your health care provider for a historical record
 - Visit: www.hamilton.ca/reportingvaccines and click on “online Reporting Tool” to access a historical record of vaccines through ICON.
Note: Vaccines on ICON are only those that have been previously reported to Public Health or have been administered by Public Health
 - Email: vaccinerecords@hamilton.ca

Report your child’s vaccination

It is important that parents and caregivers regularly report their child’s vaccines to Public Health. Health care providers in the community do not report these vaccinations to Public Health. Visit: www.hamilton.ca/reportingvaccines for more information on the best way to report vaccinations to Public Health.

If you have any questions, please visit www.hamilton.ca/publichealth or call 905-546-CITY (2489).