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Measles Activity on Vancouver Island

We have had 8 confirmed cases of measles on Vancouver Island in 2019, with the last reported case occurring in April. Of these cases, 4 were international travel associated and 4 were acquired on Vancouver Island with no known exposure source, but likely linked to a common exposure in mid March. There have been no further transmissions related to these cases.

There have been multiple cases of measles occurring in other Canadian provinces (Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick) this year, as well as ongoing outbreaks in the USA and overseas. Vaccination remains our best preventative measure.

Measles vaccine recommendations remain unchanged:

- All children should receive MMR at 12 months of age and at kindergarten entry (4-6 years).
- All adults born in 1970 or later, and health care workers born in 1957 or later, should have two documented doses of MMR vaccine.
- Adults born before 1970, and health care workers born before 1957, are considered immune to measles.

Many adults have an uncertain history of immunization or disease; please offer a single dose of vaccine if you think it is likely they are not immune from either infection or vaccination. Please prioritize immunization for patients travelling to places where measles is circulating.

Testing not recommended for MMR vaccine- related fever and rash

The measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe and effective, and most people have no adverse reaction following receipt of this vaccine apart from redness, pain and swelling at the injection site. A small proportion experience events such as malaise, fever, parotitis, rash, lymphadenopathy or arthralgia around 7 – 10 days (range 5 - 30 days) following MMR vaccine. These are more common following the first dose of the vaccine in a non-immune individual, and are self-limited, lasting up to 3 days. These symptoms and signs can resemble those associated with wild type measles, mumps or rubella infection, and are related to the live attenuated measles, mumps and rubella vaccine strain viruses which replicate in the human host. About 1-10% of vaccine recipients may experience a measles-like rash and/or fever of > 39°C, and less than 1% may experience cough and/or conjunctivitis. If a patient presents with measles-like symptoms within 5 – 30 days of receiving an MMR vaccine and does not have a known measles exposure or recent travel history, *do not test them for measles*.

Provincial Measles Catch Up Campaign for Children

In April, the Government of British Columbia launched a measles immunization catch-up program to help B.C. families ensure their children are protected from measles. The program has been running from April through June 2019, with a goal of immunizing as many of the under immunized school aged children as possible by the end of the school year.

On Vancouver Island, Public Health has begun contacting students and families through schools to advise them of their vaccination status and if it appears that they are underimmunized for measles, offering opportunities for immunization either through school-based clinics (primarily in middle and high schools) or health unit clinics. Students can also receive immunization through physicians and pharmacists. We ask that if you are immunizing children under age 19, please send a record of this immunization to your local health unit so this information can be entered into the Public Health database.

The catch-up program is phase one of the government's two-phase plan to increase immunization rates for all vaccine-preventable diseases, educate the public about the importance of immunization, and increase awareness of their immunization status. Phase two – mandatory reporting of students' immunization status – will begin in B.C. schools in September 2019, with details announced in the near future.