

ISC Alberta Region-Update for Chiefs

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) develops and delivers holistic approaches to social, healthcare and infrastructure services to our Indigenous partners by working collaboratively to improve access to high quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

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Measles Edition

Current Alberta Context

There are confirmed cases of measles in Alberta.

There is currently a measles outbreak in a northern Alberta community. The origin of the outbreak is not yet known. In recent months there has been an increase in measles cases in other parts of Canada and the United States.

Measles is a serious viral illness. It is airborne and highly transmissible.

Measles is one of the most contagious diseases in the world and can lead to serious infection. Children under the age of five, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with a weak immune system are most likely to get complications from measles infection.

Those who are not vaccinated or are only partially vaccinated for measles are most at risk for contracting the disease.

 **Two doses of measles vaccine is 99% effective.**



Question:

Why is measles such a big deal?

Answer:

Measles is one of the most contagious diseases in the world and can lead to serious infection. Hospitalization can occur in approximately one of every five people.

Serious complications of measles, particularly in unvaccinated children, can include pneumonia, hearing loss, blindness, and brain swelling. For those who are pregnant, this disease can cause premature labour or miscarriage.

There is also evidence that measles can suppress the immune system for months to years after the infection.

There is no specific treatment for measles. Medical care addresses symptom relief and management of complications.

Measles: meeting the challenge

There are challenges to reducing cases.



Measles spreads easily through the air.

You do not need to be in direct contact with someone who is infected. The measles virus can stay in the air for up to two hours. This means that individuals can be at risk of infection if they were in a common area occupied by an infected person two hours before.

Measles can also be spread through coughing, sneezing, yelling, singing, and breathing.

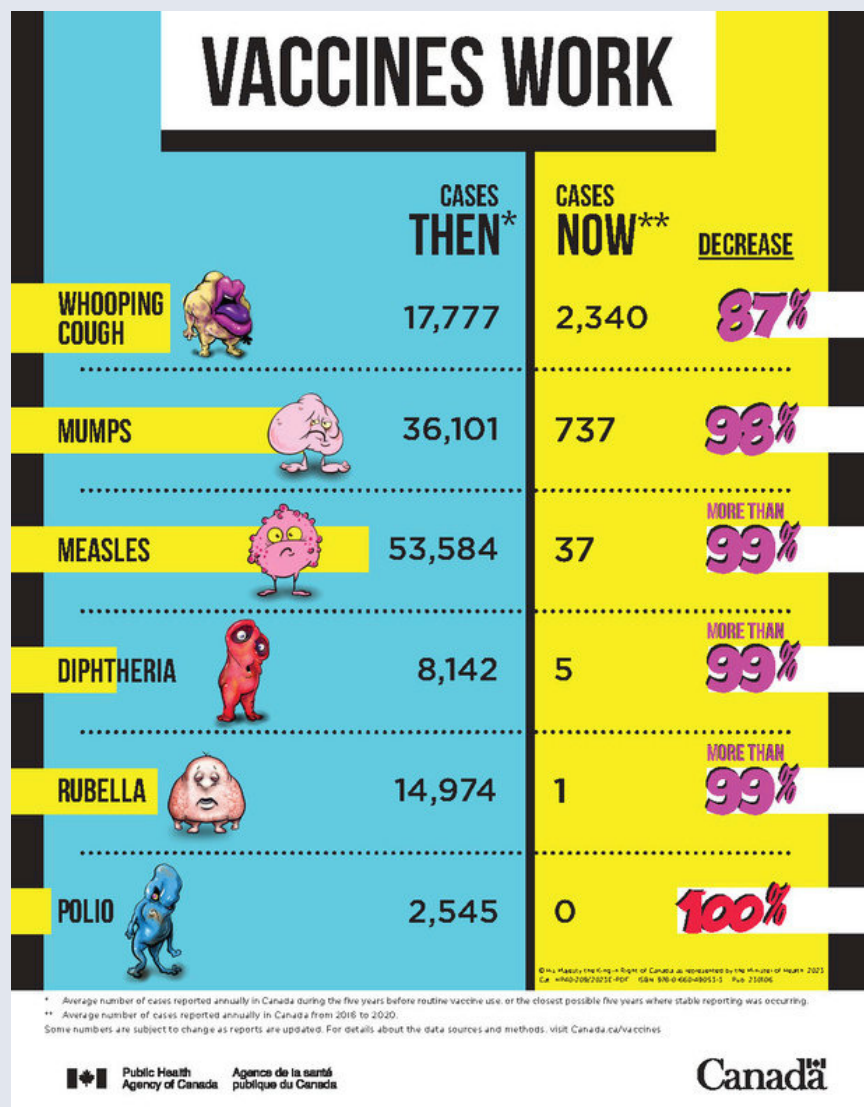
If you have measles, you can infect others with the disease before you show any symptoms. Measles is contagious starting four days before the rash appears until four days after the rash subsides.

Vaccine is the best protection against measles.

In Canada, vaccine programs have decreased the number of measles cases by 99%, due to the success of measles immunization programs. However, internationally many deaths still occur because of this disease. Serious outcomes for those who do not have immunity can include complications like pneumonia, ear infections, blindness and, less commonly, swelling of the brain. This is why being vaccinated for measles is so important.

Individuals require two doses of vaccine to be considered fully protected, but even one dose offers protection at 87%. Two doses is 99% effective.

Children typically receive measles-containing vaccine at 12 and 18 months of age. "For adults, those born earlier than 1970 (age 56 and older) are considered likely immune from past infection in childhood. Those born in 1970 or later (age 55 and younger) need two valid doses of vaccine for lifetime protection.



To download this poster, please click [here](#).

What we can do as individuals

“I think I might have measles. What should I do?”

If you or your child is showing symptoms of measles, **stay at home, avoid contact with others**, and call your health centre or Health Link at 811 before visiting any hospital, clinic, or healthcare provider. It is important to not visit the health centre before calling, as you may put others at risk.

“I think I’ve been exposed to measles. What should I do?”

If you suspect that you have been exposed to a confirmed case of measles, you should check your immunization history.

- If you have two doses of measles vaccine, you are protected.
- If you were born before 1970, you would also be considered to be protected.
- **If you are 55 or younger and don’t have two doses of measles vaccine, stay home and away from others.**

It is also very important that you monitor for early symptoms of measles such as red eyes, runny nose, sore throat, cough, and rash. If you become ill, contact your health centre. Do not visit in person before calling, as you may put others at risk.

It can take seven to 21 days after being exposed for symptoms to appear.

Do you suspect you have measles or have two or more measles symptoms?



Stay home and call 811. For more info: text ‘measles’ to 88111. Vaccination is the best protection.

To download this poster, please click [here](#).

Know the signs and symptoms.

Initial symptoms of measles, which usually last four to seven days include:

- Fever
- Red and watery eyes
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Tiny white spot inside the cheeks (“Koplik Spots”)

A rash appears three to seven days after the symptoms start. The rash looks like red spots and starts on the face and upper neck. This rash then spreads down to the rest of the body, including hands and feet. The rash lasts four to seven days.



To confirm if you’ve been vaccinated for measles:

- Contact your health centre
- Call Health Link at 811
- Text ‘vaccine record’ to 88111
- More information can be found at the Alberta Health [measles website](#).

What we can do as communities

Tournaments and gatherings



**SHARE MEMORIES
★ NOT MEASLES ★**

- Do not share personal items (water bottles, cups, utensils, tooth brushes).
- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Stay home if you are sick and limit contact with others.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Keep high-touch surfaces clean (phones, door handles).
- Wear a well-fitted mask or KN95 in crowded, indoor settings.

GET VACCINATED!
Protect your team, family, friends and community

If you have symptoms, stay home and call 811.
For more info: text 'measles' to 88111

As spring break approaches, along with regular weekend activities, there will be more and more occasions where people are travelling to gather, whether it be for hockey tournaments or community events. These settings provide ideal conditions for largescale spread of measles. During these events, we encourage communities and coordinators to **promote precautionary measures to help reduce spread of infection including washing hands, covering coughs, not sharing utensils and water bottles and staying home when sick.**

To download this poster, please click [here](#).

Preventing spread in schools

Hygiene practices play a big role in keeping schools safe. Encourage children, students, fellow staff and visitors to:

- wash their hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- place used tissues into a waste basket and then perform hand hygiene
- cough or sneeze into their elbow
- not share water bottles, lipstick, lip balm or drinks
- stay home from school when not feeling well

Schools and community gathering spaces should also clean more frequently, paying extra attention to high touch surfaces like doorknobs, children's toys, light switches and washrooms.



Supporting One Another



Mental Health

As we all learned during the pandemic, outbreak situations can be stressful and create difficult situations for communities. These challenges can have impacts to mental health, whether it be from worry over the situation, from isolation or vaccine hesitancy. Support is available.



First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line:

1.855.242.3310 or www.hopeforwellness.ca

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to First Nations, Inuit, and Peoples seeking emotional support, crisis intervention, or referrals to community-based services

Alberta Health Services Indigenous Support Line:

1.844.944.4744

Connecting Indigenous callers with Indigenous listeners 12pm-8pm, Monday to Friday.

Alberta Indigenous Virtual Care Clinic:

1.888.342.4822

Serves individuals self-identifying as First Nations, Inuit and Métis and their immediate family members.

Further Reading and Resources

Information sources

[Statement from the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada on the Increase in Measles Cases and the Risk to People in Canada - Canada.ca](#)

[Measles - myhealth.alberta.ca](#)

[Measles vaccine - Indigenous Services Canada](#)

[Measles Resources - Infection Prevention and Control Canada \(IPAC\)](#)

[Immunize Canada - measles webpage](#)

Health Promotion

ISC - [Don't Wait, Vaccinate! Measles Factsheet](#)

ISC-AB - Share Memories Not Measles ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Measles is Extremely Contagious ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Do you suspect you have measles? ([poster](#))

ISC-AB - Stop the Spread! Measles is extremely contagious ([poster](#))

Vaccine Hesitancy

[Dealing with needle pain and fear](#)

[Ask a scientist: What do I do if I'm scared of needle pain?](#)

Events and Recordings

Save
the
date

March 21, 2025 from 1:30 to 3:00 PM

Measles Telehealth for Health Care Professionals

More details to come.

[Let's talk about measles - First Nations Telehealth Network - Recording](#) (March 20, 2024)

[Let's talk about measles, again - First Nations Telehealth Network - Recording](#) (May 16, 2024)

