

Information Sheet on Measles

B.C. is experiencing a measles outbreak across the Vancouver Coastal Health region, with reported cases linked to international travel and schools.

- If you will be travelling over Spring Break, it is important to confirm that your and your family's immunizations are up to date.
- Measles is very contagious and spreads easily through an infected person breathing, coughing or sneezing. You don't have to be close contact with the person – the virus can survive in a room for up to four hours!
- The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your community from measles and is free for everyone in B.C. at public health units, doctors' offices and pharmacies (pharmacists can provide immunizations for anyone over the age of 5).
- Other health professionals such as nurses, nurse practitioners, and naturopaths are also authorized to provide the MMR vaccine.
- The sooner you get the MMR vaccine, the better the chances that you can prevent the disease from spreading further.
- Check your immunization status with your doctor, nurse practitioner or local public health unit.
- If you are still unsure about your measles immunization history, it is safe and recommended to get a booster shot of the MMR vaccine.

Who Should Be Immunized?

It's important that everyone receive immunizations, so they can protect themselves, their family and the community. There are some people who are not able to be immunized with MMR because of age (under 1 year old) or because of allergies or a weakened immune system. Ensuring high levels of immunization in our community protects these people as well.

Infants (under 12 months old)

- The MMR vaccine is not recommended for infants, as they may not respond to the measles component of the vaccine due to the presence of antibodies received from their mother during pregnancy.
- The MMR vaccine is only recommended for infants 6-11 months old if traveling overseas to areas with ongoing measles outbreaks. (The child would still need two doses of the MMR vaccine after they turned 12 months old for long term protection).
- Some health-care providers, including pharmacists, do not provide the MMR vaccine for infants.

Children (12 months to 6 years old)

- Two doses of the MMR vaccine are given; one at 12 months, another at 4-6 years. Children who need protection against chickenpox (varicella) can receive the combined MMRV vaccine as their second dose.
- Some health-care providers, including pharmacists, do not provide the MMR vaccine for children under 5 years old.

Older Children/Teens/Adults

- Two doses of the MMR vaccine are recommended for those who have not been immunized.
- People born between 1970 and 1990 may have only received a single dose and should get a booster shot to increase their protection to 99%.
- If you aren't sure, a booster shot is safe and recommended.
- People born before 1970 are generally assumed to have acquired immunity to measles from natural infection, and therefore therefore immunization for measles is not needed.
- Health-care workers born between 1957 and 1969 are recommended to have two doses of MMR vaccine.

Where to Get Immunized

- Find a public health unit anywhere in the province at ImmunizeBC.ca (<https://immunizebc.ca>)
- Find a community pharmacy anywhere in the province at the College of Pharmacists of BC (<http://www.bcpharmacists.org/search-pharmacy>)
- We recommend calling ahead to your doctor's office, pharmacy or public health unit.

More Information

For more information, please go to Immunize BC at <https://immunizeBC.ca/measles> or HealthLink BC at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/measles> or <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/measles-faq>