

Measles Outbreak Declared Over

The measles outbreak that began in March 2008 has been declared over by Toronto Public Health (TPH) as no new cases have been reported in two consecutive incubation periods for measles (42 days). A total of 26 outbreak associated cases were reported to TPH (in addition to two individuals who were infected with measles outside of Canada during the outbreak period). An additional 30 outbreak associated cases were also reported in Ontario outside Toronto. No deaths or serious complications occurred in the cases reported to TPH.

Of the 26 cases reported to TPH, only one had received two confirmed doses of measles containing vaccine before exposure. Seven individuals had received one dose of vaccine, 10 cases had not been vaccinated, and eight had unknown vaccination status.

During this outbreak, TPH staff followed-up on over 4,300 contacts of cases and 128 individuals sick with measles-like symptoms who needed to be ruled out. In addition, TPH vaccinated 454 people, gave immune globulin to 28 individuals and excluded 429 individuals from work/public activities to prevent the further spread of measles.

This was the largest measles outbreak in Toronto since 1996, the year of the provincial measles vaccination catch-up campaign. High rates of routine MMR vaccination of young infants and school students were important factors in preventing the outbreak from causing serious illness. Half of the outbreak cases were in individuals born in the 1970s, a group that likely missed receiving their second measles vaccine during the catch-up campaign.

Measles remains endemic in many countries, and a resurgence of measles is being observed throughout the world wherever vaccination coverage is inadequate. Currently, the United States is experiencing its largest measles outbreak in more than a decade, which has spread to 15 states. Cases are primarily being seen in unimmunized children and groups. Moreover, measles has also become endemic in the United Kingdom 14 years after the transmission of the disease was halted. Therefore, TPH is encouraging Toronto clinicians to remain vigilant for measles in individuals who present with febrile rash illness.

Toronto Public Health would like to thank you for your assistance in this outbreak by reporting and treating suspected and confirmed cases of measles and encouraging MMR vaccination to susceptible groups.

Measles is a reportable communicable disease. Please report all suspect and confirmed cases of measles immediately to TPH at 416-392-7411 (after hours at 416-690-2142).

Web-site: <http://www.toronto.ca/health/cdc/surveillance>