



February 23, 2015

To the School Community:

In the past few weeks, a number of measles cases have been confirmed throughout the province. Measles is a highly contagious viral infection, so it's important to ensure everyone's measles vaccinations are up-to-date. At this time, there are no local confirmed cases of measles.

Symptoms of measles include fever, runny nose, cough, drowsiness, irritability, and red eyes. Small white spots may appear on the inside of the mouth and throat. Then, a red blotchy rash appears on the face and neck, slowly spreading down and covering the body including hands and feet.

Complications can include pneumonia, ear infections, seizures and infections of the brain (encephalitis).

Measles is most contagious from about four days before the rash appears to four days after the rash appears. Measles spreads from person-to-person through contact with tiny droplets from the mouth or nose of infected people. Small droplets can also remain floating in the air for up to two hours. Measles can be spread when air space is shared.

There is no cure for measles, so prevention is key. The measles immunization is a safe and effective way to help prevent the spread of the virus.

In Ontario, the vaccine is publicly-funded and typically given to children in two doses: The first dose of measles vaccine is given soon after a child's first birthday. It is covered in the MMR shot, a three-in-one vaccine that provides protection against measles, mumps and rubella. The second dose of measles vaccine is given to children just prior to starting school (between four and six years of age). It is given in the MMRV shot, a four-in-one vaccine that protects against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox).

The Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) requires that children attending school have up-to-date childhood immunizations or a valid exemption to not receive vaccines due to medical reasons, reasons of conscience, or religious beliefs. Should a measles case be identified in the school community, children who are not immunized will not be permitted to attend school during the outbreak period.

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Please check your children's immunization records to ensure they have received these vaccines. If you are unsure of the vaccines you or your family has received, contact your physician's office. Make sure you keep a copy of the record in a safe place for future reference.

If you think you or your child may be ill with measles seek medical attention immediately – but call BEFORE going to your health care provider's office or clinic so precautions can be taken to make sure no one else is put at risk for catching measles.

To learn more about measles, visit the Health Unit's website at www.pcchu.ca or Public Health Ontario at www.publichealthontario.ca.

Yours Truly,

BOARD OF HEALTH FOR THE
PETERBOROUGH COUNTY-CITY HEALTH UNIT

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. Pellizzari". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosana Pellizzari, MD, CCFP, MSC, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

