



The Mortar & Pestle

Volume 4 Issue II (November)
Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare
SPECIAL EDITION: VACCINES

SOUTHERN ALBERTA: MEASLES OUTBREAK

On October 29, 2013 Alberta Health Services announced 13 cases of measles have been confirmed and many more suspected cases are awaiting laboratory confirmation.

There are two types of measles and in the case of this measles outbreak refers only to **rubella or “red” measles**. **This form of measles is one of the most highly contagious diseases found world wide.**

How can you prevent the spread of measles?

YES! Vaccine rates of greater ~95% are needed to create “community” immunity which would slow the spread of measles. Lethbridge County has a vaccine rate of only **61%**, which means the measles outbreak can spread very quickly among those who are unvaccinated. **The single most important way to prevent the spread of measles is to be immunized with the measles vaccine.**

Alberta Health Services has opened measles vaccinations clinics in order to vaccinate those who have not yet been vaccinated. The vaccine is typically given to infants 12 months and older; however during the outbreak parents of children aged 6 months and older will be able to choose to have their infants vaccinated.

How is measles spread?

Measles is so contagious because it is **airborne**, with about 90% of un-vaccinated people becoming infected after exposure to an infected person. People can be infected and spread the virus for 1-2 days before they have any symptoms and continue to do so for 4 days after the rash appears.

What are the Symptoms of measles?

Initially symptoms resemble that of a cold or flu and include **fever, runny nose and red eyes**. After a few days, a **red blotchy rash** starts appearing on the face and then quickly spreads to cover the entire body.

What are the complications of measles?

Measles can be very serious in some cases and cause ear infections, pneumonia, brain infections or death.

What should you do if you suspect someone has measles?

If you suspect you or a family member has measles **DO NOT go to your doctor’s office or the hospital.** **Call Health Link at 1-866-408-5465** and nurses will advise you on how to proceed.

Please visit <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/9236.asp> for more information on clinics and procedures during this outbreak.

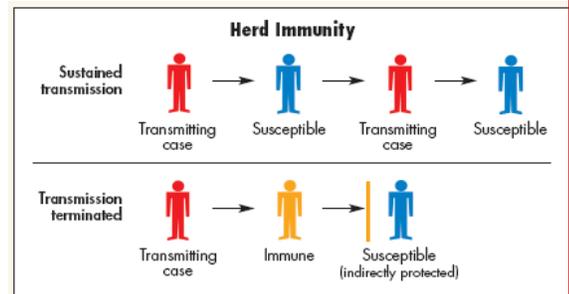


Figure – The principle underlying herd immunity is that the presence of enough immune persons in a community interrupts the transmission of an infectious agent, thereby providing indirect protection for unimmunized (or “susceptible”) persons.

CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS

The recent measles outbreak is a scary reminder of the important role vaccinations play in protecting a child's health. Today we can protect children from **14 serious diseases**. Failure to vaccinate means putting children at risk for serious diseases. Despite this, **vaccine rates have been falling at a steady pace** over the last 5-10 years due to growing fears over risks that vaccines pose to infants. The spread of the anti-vaccination movement is largely due to myths and/or misinformation about vaccines. Celebrities have also played a role by spreading non-truths about vaccines in the news.

Some Myths About Vaccines:

- 1) **Vaccines cause autism. False.** The supposed link between vaccines and autism has been discredited. There is no evidence that vaccines cause autism, **14 studies** have shown that if your child is given the MMR vaccine; they have no increased risk for autism.
- 2) **If other children are vaccinated, I don't need to vaccinate mine. False.** The ability of immunizations to prevent the spread of disease depends on having the majority of the populations immunized. For example, an immunization rate of 95% is required to prevent a disease like measles from spreading.
- 3) **Getting so many vaccinations will overwhelm my child's immune system. False.** An infant's immune system is bombarded with viruses and bacteria all day, every day. This is the mechanism by which their immune system is strengthened and matured. When compared to what children encounter each and every day, the vaccine exposure is negligible.
- 4) **We don't need vaccines anymore now that vaccine preventable diseases have largely disappeared. False.** Most vaccine preventable diseases can still be found in Canada. Low vaccination rates and travel to foreign countries is resulting in re-occurrences of vaccine preventable diseases like measles and pertussis.
- 5) **My child will get the disease from the vaccine. False.** Most of the vaccines given today contain a portion of the dead virus which stimulates an immune response. The MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella, varicella) contains a live weaker form of the viruses which may cause mild illness such as a fever or small rash.
- 6) **Vaccines contain preservatives that are dangerous. False.** Thiomersol has been removed from almost all childhood vaccines due to rising fears about the ingredient. The fears are unfounded as thiomersol is not the same as methyl mercury. Methyl mercury is found in the environment and accumulates in fish. Exposure to mercury in the environment is the biggest source of mercury exposure.
- 7) **Vaccines can provide 100% disease prevention. False.** Vaccines are 75-95% effective depending on the vaccine. The more people immunized the slower the spread of the disease.
- 8) **It is best to wait until children are older before starting to give them vaccines. False.** Immunization schedules are designed to protect the most vulnerable patients from disease. If you wait, you may miss protecting your child when they are at the highest risk of contracting a disease.

Immunization is one of the most important things a parent can do to protect their children's health. Vaccines are very safe. Like most medications vaccines may cause side effects most of which are minor and may include a mild fever or "fussiness". To have your child vaccinated please call the **Lethbridge Community Health Center** today at **403-388-6666**. Do not delay; have your child vaccinated today!

HAVE YOUR INJECTION ADMINISTERED AT STAFFORD PHARMACY

Stafford Pharmacy is pleased to offer injection administration at our pharmacy! Our pharmacists have received additional training and certification allowing them to administer vaccinations and medications by injection. Pharmacists continue their education and training each and every year, in order to maintain their practice license as well as obtaining these advanced certifications.

The following is a list of some of the injections which may be administered by one of our pharmacists:

- **Hepatitis A/B vaccinations**
- **Shingles vaccination**
- **HPV Vaccination**
- **Vitamin B12**
- **Iron**
- **Epnex and Aranesp**
- **Innohep, Lovenox, Fragmin**
- **Many, many more!!!**

Please note that most of the above listed injections require a prescription, which traditionally would be issued by your doctor. One of our Pharmacists, **Jaelyn Katelnikoff**, has “**Advanced Prescribing Authority**” and can therefore issue prescriptions for these vaccinations if it is judged that such a vaccination is appropriate for an individual. The decision to prescribe is NOT routine and done on a patient by patient basis, after a health and medication assessment is done by the prescribing pharmacist, so it is advisable to allow some additional time for such an appointment.

Yes, the administration of these injections is done by appointment only. During an injection appointment the pharmacist will ensure that it is safe to administer the injection and will explain how the injection will affect that person. A consent form must be signed, giving the pharmacist permission to give the injection. After the injection is done, the patient is asked to stay in the pharmacy for 15 minutes to ensure that no adverse reactions are experienced, although they're occurrence is rare.

The cost to have an injection administered at our pharmacy is \$20 plus the cost of the medication/vaccine. There are some instances where these costs may be covered by your drug plan or Alberta Health. Fees must be assessed on an individual basis due to large number of health insurance plan (both private and public).

Call (403) 320-6500 to arrange an appointment with one of our pharmacists to discuss your vaccination requirements or to have your injection administered.

FLU CLINICS ARE ONGOING

Stafford Pharmacy will continue to offer the Seasonal Flu Vaccine throughout flu season until March of 2013. The flu vaccine is **free of charge** for all Albertans with a valid Alberta Health care card. Anyone aged 9 and older presenting a valid Alberta Health Care card is eligible to receive a FREE flu vaccination by one of our trained pharmacists or nurse. Children aged less than 9 must get their vaccination from the Lethbridge Community Health Center, their family physician or attend one of the flu clinics at the Exhibition Park.

Flu clinics will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 PM to 4:30 PM and no appointment is needed. Please bring your Alberta Health Care card, wear a short sleeved shirt and be prepared to wait for 15 minutes after you receive your injection.



ADULT VACCINATIONS

When you think of vaccinations, many images may come to mind. You may think of small children at the doctor's office teary eyed and screaming. You may remember the fear you had before the school nurse gave you a vaccination as a child. **With that said vaccines are as important for both adults as they are for children, however many adults are not up to date on their vaccines.** Ensuring that you are up to date on your vaccination is important for ongoing disease prevention, as well as to protect infants and children from disease.

Why do Adults Need Vaccines?

- 1.) **You may no longer be protected.** Immunity provided by certain vaccines is not lifelong. For example, you should receive a tetanus booster every 10 years.
- 2.) **Getting vaccinated as an adult protects young children and babies** from diseases they haven't been vaccinated against. Both the whooping cough vaccine and flu shot are two in particular that are important for adults who will be around infants.
- 3.) **Some vaccines are only for adults.** The vaccine to prevent shingles is only administered to adults over 50 years old.
- 4.) **You may need them for travel.** When traveling you may encounter diseases that are not found in Canada that require a vaccination for protection.
- 5.) **The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone.** Flu vaccines are required on an annual basis to ensure you are protected from each year's flu bug.
- 6.) **You didn't get fully vaccinated as a child.** If you didn't get vaccinated against measles, mumps, rubella, or other common childhood vaccines it's not too late. The measles vaccine is especially important right now during an outbreak (See next page).
- 7.) **Newer Vaccines have been developed.** For example, the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer and the shingles vaccine have only been on the market since 2006.
- 8.) **You have asthma, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes or other chronic conditions.** These conditions put you at a higher risk of pneumonia and influenza therefore vaccination is highly recommended.

Knowing which vaccines you need is an important step toward protecting your health and that of your family and friends. Getting vaccines on time helps prevent illness before you're exposed.

Our pharmacists are trained to assess your vaccination status as well as to administer the vaccinations, should you need one! If you have questions about your vaccination status speak with a member of our pharmacy team today or call to schedule an appointment with one of our pharmacists to have your vaccination status assessed! Call 403-320-6500 and Select Menu Option 1.



Volume 4, Issue 11

Content/Writer: Jaclyn Katelnikoff, Clinical Pharmacist

Editor: Igor Shaskin, Clinical Pharmacist

Reviewer: Pete Christensen, Clinical Pharmacist