

# Important information about measles

## To parents and school staff

### Re: Catch-up measles vaccination campaign in schools

An epidemic of measles (rubeola) has been spreading in Québec since April 2011. **More than 750 cases have been reported to date, of which two-thirds have been in schools.** This is the largest measles outbreak in the Americas since 2002.

Measles is a severe and highly contagious disease that is caught by breathing the same air as an infected person. Measles causes high fever, runny nose, red and watery eyes, cough, and red spots on the body. The person is contagious for four days before and four days after spots appear. The illness lasts for one to two weeks, and at least one out of every ten people who contract the disease will require hospitalization.

Measles can cause major complications, such as an infection of the lungs (pneumonia) or the brain (encephalitis).

Up to now, the disease has mainly appeared in young people 5 to 19 years old. Most people who have caught measles had not been vaccinated against it or had not received all the doses of vaccine they were supposed to. Fortunately, there have been no reported deaths in Québec; however, in France, 16 cases of encephalitis and 6 deaths have been reported out of 14,500 cases that occurred in the first 8 months of 2011, despite excellent health care in that country.

### Vaccination campaign

The health network, in cooperation with the school network, is launching a selective catch-up vaccination campaign in all schools in Québec. The goal is to vaccinate students and staff who have not received all the necessary doses of vaccine or who do not have proof of vaccination (vaccination record or other).

Currently, not enough people have been vaccinated to prevent measles from spreading. People cannot rely on others' having been vaccinated to avoid catching the disease themselves. At least one child in ten in Québec is at risk of catching measles and then transmitting it to other students, babies too young to be vaccinated, pregnant women, or people who cannot be vaccinated because they are cancer or organ transplant patients.

There is no specific treatment for measles. Basic care can be given to ease the symptoms, such as medications to relieve fever.

**Your collaboration is needed!**

Depending on the activities planned at the school, you may need to furnish proof of vaccination against measles. Don't forget to sign the consent form that you will receive so that the nurse can go ahead with the vaccination, if it is required. The vaccine will be administered at school.

**ARE YOUR FAMILY'S VACCINATIONS UP TO DATE?**

Make sure all of your family members are well-protected against measles.

<p>A person is considered to be protected if he or she:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ was born in 1980 or after, and received two doses of measles (rubeola) vaccine on or after his or her first birthday;</li> <li>◆ was born between 1970 and 1979, and received one dose of measles vaccine on or after his or her first birthday;</li> <li>◆ was born before 1970, even if he or she has never been vaccinated against measles.</li> </ul>
--

Vaccination remains the most effective way to protect yourself against measles. It is most effective when given before contact with a contagious person. If you have been vaccinated, you will find one of the following vaccine names in your vaccination record: M-M-R, M-M-R II, Priorix or Priorix-Tetra, Trivirix, Attenuvax, Rimevax, Rubeovax, Lirugen, M-R Vax, anti-rubeola vaccine (*vaccin anti-rougeoleux*).

**What should I do if I'm sick? Stay home!**

<b>If you or your child has the following symptoms:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High fever</li> <li>• Runny nose</li> <li>• Red, watery eyes</li> <li>• Cough</li> <li>• Red spots all over the body</li> </ul>	<p><b>Stay home!</b> You or your child is at risk of infecting others.</p>

For more information about measles, the vaccine, and the campaign in schools, contact your school nurse or a health care professional, visit the website at [www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/rougeole](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/rougeole), or call Info Santé by dialling 8-1-1.