



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA



# Measles Immunization Catch-up Program

May 2019

May 9, 2019

Dear British Columbians,

Measles is a highly infectious disease and there have been several outbreaks in the world since fall 2018. This rare disease is typically acquired abroad and has been considered as eradicated in North America. Unfortunately, since Jan. 1, 2019, there have been 704 cases reported in the U.S. and 29 confirmed here in British Columbia


Based on the latest international data, there have been more than 31,000 cases in the Philippines, 25,000 cases in the Ukraine and 16,000 cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – including 284 deaths – since the beginning of this year. Given the global situation, there may be more cases in the coming months– indeed, the coming years. Immunization is our best defense against this outbreak. To protect children and others who cannot be immunized for medical reasons, we launched the measles immunization catch-up program in April, running now to June 2019.

We know most of you support immunization, but sometimes children’s immunizations are late or missing. Life happens; we understand. Parents demands are numerous and sometimes immunizations slip or records are not updated. By offering in-school clinics and additional immunization at public health units, we hope it will make it easier for B.C. students to be fully protected against measles.

In March, we committed to a monthly update on the program’s progress. This report is our commitment to British Columbians, as we continue to “catch-up” on all students who are under/ unimmunized for measles. There will be an update in June on the progress made in May 2019.

All of our health authorities and schools have been contacting families about the measles immunization catch-up program. If you have questions about immunization, please talk to your doctor or registered public health nurse. You can also call the 8-1-1 provincial health line to talk to a registered nurse at any time, every day of the year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Dix', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health

## Measles in B.C.

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According to the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#), as of May 6, 2019, there have been 29 confirmed cases of measles reported in B.C. since January 2019. These include: nine cases in the Fraser Health region; 10 cases in Vancouver Coastal Health; two cases in Interior Health; and eight cases in Island Health.

To prevent further outbreaks and improve immunization rates for school-aged children, the Province launched a [measles immunization catch-up program](#) for kids in kindergarten to Grade 12 from April to the end of June 2019. In the first month of the program (April), health authorities' efforts were focused on reviewing all of the students' immunization records, and informing families and schools. This preparation was necessary to effectively plan the immunization clinics for the students who are under/unimmunized for measles. In May and June, immunization clinics will be running in schools and communities across the province.

Pharmacists and family physicians are key partners in the catch-up program. Children and adults can be immunized by pharmacists (children age five and up), as well as by their family physicians. In April 2019, pharmacists administered 215 doses of measles-containing vaccine to children and youth aged 5-19.

The catch-up program is phase one of the government's two-phase plan to increase immunization rates for all vaccine-preventable diseases, educate the public about the importance of immunization, and increase awareness of their immunization status. Phase two – mandatory reporting of students' immunization status – will begin in B.C. schools in September 2019, with details announced in the near future.

## Measles in Canada

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There have been 41 cases of measles reported in Canada from January 1 to April 13, 2019. These cases were reported by Québec, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, and Alberta.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada. "Weekly measles and rubella reports." April 26, 2019.

## Measles Worldwide

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In April 2019, the World Health Organization reported that cases of measles around the world rose by 300 per cent in the first three months of 2019, compared to the same period in 2018.<sup>2</sup> Many countries are currently experiencing sizeable measles outbreaks and all regions of the world are recording sustained rises in measles cases.<sup>3</sup>

Countries with large measles outbreaks:

- United States of America (704 cases since Jan. 1, 2019)<sup>4</sup>;
- Philippines (31,056 cases since Jan. 1, 2019)<sup>5</sup>;
- Japan (406 cases from January 1 to April 17, 2019)<sup>6</sup>;
- Israel (3,900 cases between March 2018 and April 2019)<sup>7</sup>;
- France (313 cases in 2019)<sup>8</sup>;
- Ukraine (25,319 cases since Jan. 1, 2019)<sup>9</sup>;
- Brazil (10,300 cases since 2018)<sup>10</sup>;
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (16,000 cases and 284 deaths in 2019)<sup>11</sup>.

Given the ongoing measles outbreak in the world, it is likely there may be more cases in British Columbia linked to travel abroad or travellers to or through the province in the future.

The Ministry of Health is working with the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, health authorities and education partners to raise the immunization rates in children to 95% to achieve herd immunity in the future in order to protect those who cannot be immunized for medical reasons.

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2 World Health Organization. "New measles surveillance data for 2019." April 15, 2019.

3 World Health Organization. "New measles surveillance data for 2019." April 15, 2019.

4 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Measles Cases and Outbreaks." April 26, 2019.

5 Republic of the Philippines, Department of Health. "DOH says measles outbreak remains but is under control."

6 Japan; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. "2. Weekly measles cases, week 1-15, 2019." April 17, 2019.

7 State of Israel, Ministry of Health. "Measles: Measles in Israel!"

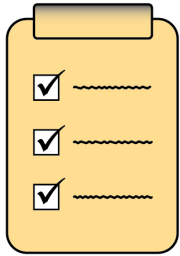
8 World Health Organization. "Reported measles and rubella cases and incidence rates by member states." April 9, 2019.

9 World Health Organization. "Reported measles and rubella cases and incidence rates by member states." April 9, 2019.

10 Government of Canada. "Travel health notices: Measles in South America." April 25, 2019.

11 U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. "Global Measles Outbreaks: WHO Africa Region." Feb. 24, 2019

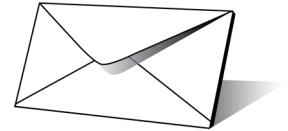
# Measles Immunization Catch-up Program : April 1-30, 2019



**400,776**

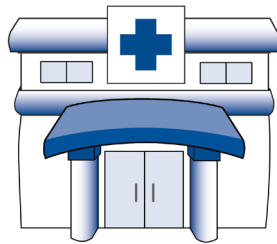
immunization records  
have been reviewed

**551,120**



letters were  
sent to families

**1,343**



public health unit  
and community-  
based clinics held

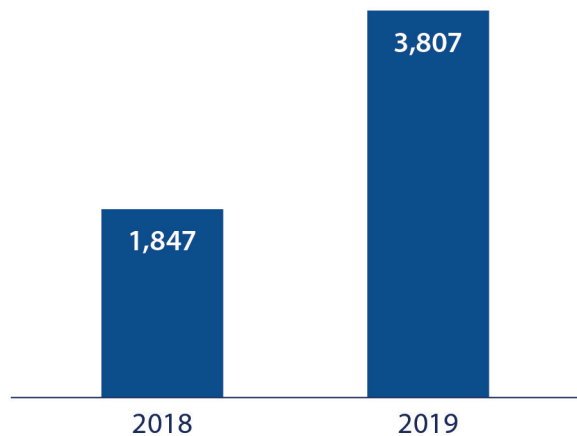
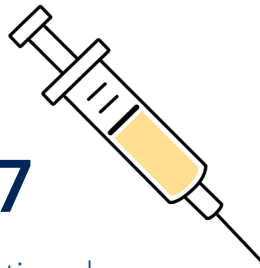


**129**

school-based  
clinics held

**3,807**

immunizations have  
been provided to  
K-12 students by  
health authorities



**= 106% increase over 2018**

## Measles Immunization Catch-up Program : Health Authorities

Each health authority has been actively involved in the measles immunization catch-up program. The following charts detail what each health authority has achieved to date.

There are 82,195 First Nations children in the B.C. school system, including public, independent, alternative, First Nations schools and distance education. First Nations children's immunization and records are counted under regional health authorities based on their location of residence.

### Total number of school-aged children (K-12) in the Public Health Information System

FH	IH	NH	VIHA	VCH	BC
263,488	93,785	44,368	93,111	127,204	621,956

### Total number of immunization records reviewed, April 2019

FH	IH	NH	VIHA	VCH	BC
124,953	93,785	44,368	10,466	127,204	400,776

### Total number of letters sent to home with students, April 2019

FH	IH	NH	VIHA	VCH	BC
263,488	117,000	46,000	104,000	20,632 <sup>1</sup>	551,120

<sup>1</sup> Vancouver Coastal Health sent letters home with students who were missing doses, who had no records, who were missing information or who were new to the area and were not in the Public Health Information System.

**NOTE:** Fraser Health = FH; Interior Health = IH, Island Health = VIHA; Vancouver Coastal Health = VCH; Northern Health = NH.

## Measles Immunization Catch-up Program : B.C.

Total number of doses distributed by the BC Centre for Disease Control to health authorities

Date	2018	2019
January 1 – March 31	29,370	94,520
April 1-30	12,100	51,150

Total number of doses given to B.C. school-aged children (K-12) by health authorities

Date	2018	2019
January 1 – March 31	6,399	9,708
April 1-30	1,847	3,807

Total number of doses given to B.C. children and youth 5-19 by pharmacists

Date	2018	2019
January 1 – March 31	22	636
April 1-30	8	215

Total number of completed clinics held across the province

	January 1 - March 31		April 1-30	
	2018 <sup>2</sup>	2019	2018 <sup>2</sup>	2019
Completed Clinics				
Community - Catch up	—	316	—	135
Community - Regular/Drop-in <sup>1</sup>	3,498	3,558	1,162	1,208
School	73	112	99	129

<sup>1</sup> To support the catch-up program, regular community clinics have extended their hours of operation, added more appointments and allow for drop-in clients.

<sup>2</sup> There were no additional community immunization clinics in 2018 (e.g., catch up, extended hours, drop-in).

Total number of scheduled clinics planned in B.C.

Planned Clinics	May-June 2019
Community - Catch up	148
Community - Regular/Drop-in <sup>1</sup>	1,912
School	594

<sup>1</sup> To support the catch-up program, regular community clinics have extended their hours of operation, added more appointments and allow for drop-in clients.

