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FIFTY CASES OF RUBELLA CONFIRMED IN ONTARIO

Chief Medical Officer Of Health Says Unimmunized Pregnant Women Are Most At Risk

TORONTO – Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, today reported 50 laboratory confirmed cases of rubella (German measles) in the province – 49 in Oxford County and one in Brant County.

“Rubella is a mild, viral illness in children but it can have serious health consequences for unimmunized pregnant women and their infants,” Dr. Basrur said. “Most children in Ontario are protected against rubella through routine vaccinations, but unimmunized individuals are at risk. This outbreak is an example of what can happen when people are not vaccinated.”

Dr. Basrur is urging all women who are contemplating pregnancy to ensure that they have been immunized against rubella. Pregnant women who believe they may have been exposed to a person with rubella symptoms should contact a doctor. Rubella in an unimmunized pregnant woman – especially during the first 11 weeks of pregnancy – may result in the infection of the unborn child, leading to birth defects or miscarriage.

Rubella symptoms include a mild rash, low-grade fever and swollen glands in children. Rubella is highly contagious and is spread from person-to-person through droplets from the mouth and nose. Those with rubella are considered infectious seven days before the onset of a rash and seven days after a rash has appeared.

Unimmunized people who think they’ve been exposed to rubella should phone ahead to their doctor and schedule an appointment during off-peak times to prevent further exposure to others.

Most people have been vaccinated against rubella and should be protected from the disease. The measles, mumps, rubella vaccination is part of the routine vaccinations available to all children in the province.

“I urge all parents, not just those in Oxford and Brant Counties, to make sure their own and their children’s vaccinations are complete and up-to-date,” Dr. Basrur said.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is working with local public health officials to control any further spread of this infectious disease.

For more information on rubella, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (TTY line is 1-866-797-0007).

For further information:

Members of the media:

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