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MORE THAN 80 CASES OF RUBELLA CONFIRMED *New Medical Officer Of Health On Site To Manage Outbreak*

TORONTO – Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, today reported that the number of confirmed cases of rubella (German measles) in the province has risen to 83 from 56. This includes 79 cases in Oxford County, two in Brant County and two in Haldimand-Norfolk.

“Most Ontario children are already vaccinated against rubella. This outbreak is affecting a small population of unimmunized individuals,” Dr. Basrur said. “We now have a new Medical Officer of Health working with the community to make sure the necessary control measures are in place to contain the outbreak.”

Yesterday, Dr. Basrur appointed Dr. Doug Sider as Medical Officer of Health of the Oxford County Board of Health to investigate and control the spread of rubella in the area. Dr. Sider is also the Associate Medical Officer of Health in the Regional Niagara Public Health Department.

The ministry also sent out a notice to Ontario health care providers yesterday, informing them of the outbreak and the symptoms of the illness.

Rubella symptoms include a mild rash, low-grade fever and swollen glands. This is a relatively mild illness for children. However, rubella in an unimmunized pregnant woman – especially during the first 11 weeks of pregnancy – may cause infection in the fetus, leading to birth defects, fetal death or miscarriage.

Dr. Basrur urged all women who are contemplating pregnancy to ensure they have been immunized against rubella. Pregnant women who believe they may have been exposed to a person with rubella symptoms should seek medical advice.

Rubella is highly contagious and is spread from person-to-person through droplets from the mouth and nose. Those with rubella are considered infectious from seven days before the onset of a rash to seven days after a rash has appeared.

Confirmed cases are defined by Health Canada as people whose blood tests are positive for recent rubella disease. People who have rubella symptoms and have been in close contact with a laboratory confirmed case are also classified as confirmed.

The measles, mumps, rubella vaccination is part of the routine vaccinations available free to all children in the province.

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:

Dan Strasbourg

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(416) 314-6197

Members of the general public: (416) 327-4327, or (800) 268-1154

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