

MEMORANDUM

To: Healthcare providers in office/outpatient settings

From: Dr. Catherine Brown, Regional Medical Officer of Health, Central Zone

Date: March 28, 2025

Re: Measles testing pathways in Central Zone

The purpose of this memo is to advise providers in office/outpatient settings about the measles testing pathways available in Central Zone to diagnose and manage suspect measles cases.

For more information on measles epidemiology, prevention, and occupational health considerations, please refer to Dr. Ryan Sommers' [memo on measles](#) sent February 27, 2025.

Measles is a highly contagious infection. **If appropriate, assessing patients and collecting samples in your office is preferred.** This limits exposures to other parts of the healthcare system and minimizes delays in confirming diagnosis.

- See [Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations](#) below on guidance for safely assessing measles patients in an outpatient setting.
- Additional information regarding measles screening, testing, vaccines, and Occupational Health guidance can also be found on the [ERIN HUB](#).

Report Suspect Cases of Suspected Measles to Public Health

Measles should be reported to Public Health by telephone as soon as **suspected** (not waiting for the test results), in accordance with the [It's the Law: Reporting Notifiable Disease and Conditions](#) poster.

- Usual Working Hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.): Leave a voicemail at 902-481-5824
- After hours: Contact the Central Zone Public Health Nurse on call through QE2 Locating at 902-473-2222

While awaiting further Public Health direction, suspected cases should be tested appropriately and directed to isolate at home.

Testing Patients with Suspected Measles in Central Zone

If you're able to collect samples in your office, **order and collect a nasopharyngeal swab AND urine for measles PCR.** The [Appendix](#) below contains additional detail on specimen containers and storage. Please ensure you have NP or throat swabs in viral transport medium and sterile urine containers in stock.

If you're unable to collect nasopharyngeal samples in your office, you can arrange testing through the following options in Central Zone.

Option	Testing offered	How to arrange testing
Dartmouth General Hospital Drive-Thru	Nasopharyngeal swab <u>NO</u> urine – see note below All ages	Preferred if access to a car Contact the urgent booking line: 902-460-4129 Drive-through located behind Dartmouth General Hospital on Mt. Hope Drive
Public Health Mobile Unit	Nasopharyngeal swab and urine All ages	Preferred if transportation barriers Call Central Zone Public Health (contact info above) for help in arranging an appointment PHMU offers in-home testing
IWK Outpatient Laboratory	Nasopharyngeal swab and urine Patients 16 years and under	If possible, please use the above two options as preferred testing pathways Should testing at IWK be required, call 902-470-8015 to book an appointment Do NOT send patients directly to the IWK lab without prior notification

Note: the DGH Drive-Thru does NOT have washroom access for patients. Please either collect urine in your office OR provide the patient with a urine collection container with instructions to bring the sample to the DGH Drive-Through appointment along with the requisition.

Efforts are being made to limit the presence of patients under investigation in waiting areas, particularly emergency departments. **If a suspect measles patient requires emergency care and is being transferred to an emergency department (ED), please notify the healthcare facility (and EHS if needed) in advance.**

- NSH: Contact QE2 Locating at 902-473-2220 and ask for the ED Charge Nurse.
- IWK: Contact IWK ED at 902-470-8050 and ask for the ED Charge Nurse.
- Identify the patient as a person under investigation for measles so the ED can prepare and ensure appropriate precautions.

Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations

Identify suspect cases of measles through screening and give the patient a medical mask to wear.

Immediately isolate a patient with suspected measles in a single room/private exam room and close the door. Use Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR) where available.*

- Always perform a point-of-care risk assessment before each patient and client interaction, practice meticulous hand hygiene, and properly use personal protective equipment (PPE).

- Only HCWs with presumptive immunity should care for patients with confirmed/suspected measles, except in exceptional circumstances. Regardless of individual immune status, HCW will wear fit-tested N95 respirator when caring for a patient with suspect/confirmed measles.
- Leave procedure or office room where patient was examined empty with door closed for 2 hours. Alternatively, if using an Airborne Infection Isolation Room (AIIR), leave the room empty until the required time based on the number of air changes per hour has passed.*
- Clean the room using regular cleaner/disinfectant as per isolation protocol.

* See [NSH Airborne Precautions policy](#) for more details on Airborne Infection Isolation Room.

For more information about Physician Office IPAC management of suspected measles cases, please refer to this [NSH IPAC document](#).

Key Contacts

- Central Zone Public Health (Communicable Diseases Team): Leave a voicemail at 902-481-5824
- IPAC: Contact [Your Infection Control Team](#)
- OHS: Contact your local NSH OHS Office or OHSWMatters@nshealth.ca
- Laboratory/Medical Microbiology: Contact the Medical Microbiologist on call at 902-473-2222 or CZMicrobiologist@nshealth.ca

Thank you for your commitment to safeguarding public health. We will keep you updated with further resources and information should the situation evolve in Central Zone.

Appendix: Diagnostic Testing for Measles

LABORATORY TESTING AND SAMPLE TYPE			
	Specimens to be Collected	Specimen Containers	Test Request
Acute Illness	1) Nasopharyngeal swab / aspirate or throat swab = collect as soon as possible from rash onset (within 7 days). AND 2) Urine = collect within 14 days of rash onset.	1) Viral Transport Medium AND 2) Urine = 10 mL in a sterile container	Request Measles PCR for swab and urine.
Refrigerate samples at 4°C and send promptly to the Central Zone Laboratory at the QEII HSC. For acute illness samples: Notify Janice Pettipas at Janice.Pettipas@nshealth.ca if a sample is being sent. After hours: Inform the Microbiologist on-call at 902-473-2222.			