

## Schools, health pros alerted to red measles outbreak

Local public health authorities have advised area schools and health professionals to an outbreak of red measles involving a resident of Wellington County.

Janice Walters, Chief Nursing Officer and Manager, Control of Infectious Diseases and Tuberculosis for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, told the Citizen Wednesday that the individual is no longer at the infectious phase of the potentially lethal disease, and is known to have travelled outside the area.

A letter sent to area schools Tuesday by Rita Sethi, the health unit's Director, Community Health, advised them to monitor student attendance daily, and to report absenteeism and illness through the school Absenteeism Reporting Program.

The letter provided no details as to the local outbreak apart from saying the individual does not attend elementary or secondary school.

Ms. Walters said communication concerning the outbreak did not include a general media release because of concern that there might be public panic. However, the general public would be alerted if there were a second outbreak.

The letter to schools advised that red measles is a respiratory illness caused by a highly infectious virus. The first symptoms include a fever, runny nose and cough, red eyes that are sensitive to the light, and small red spots in the mouth. A red blotchy rash appears on the third to seventh day of the illness.

Ms. Walters said that while most residents in the health unit's jurisdiction have been immunized against red measles, not all school students have been inoculated. In the event of further outbreaks, the small minority of students who aren't immunized would be required to stay away from classes for 21 days.

She said any residents who aren't sure whether they have been immunized should check with their family physicians or the health unit's website, [www.wdgpulichealth.ca](http://www.wdgpulichealth.ca), for dates and times of immunization clinics.

On Tuesday, Manitoba health officials confirmed a second case of red measles in that province, involving a Winnipeg-area man in his mid-twenties who had been in contact with the other sufferer.

The Manitoba government said measles cases were currently also being reported in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, mostly related to ongoing outbreaks in the Philippines and the Netherlands.