



Public Health
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Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

Health Advisory

Please deliver a copy of the accompanying alert to each provider in your organization.

Thank you

Questions regarding this alert may be directed to the office of:

Alan Melnick, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Clark County Public Health
Cowlitz County Health Department
Skamania County Health Department
Wahkiakum County Department of Health and Human Services
(360) 397-8412

Please Distribute

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for specific incident for situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.



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HEALTH Advisory

August 3, 2011

TO: Physicians and other Health Care Providers

FROM: Alan Melnick, MD, MPH, CPH, Health Officer

RE:
▶ Mumps Outbreak in British Columbia
▶ School and Child Care Immunization Exemptions (**update**)

Mumps Outbreak in British Columbia

Action requested:

- Be aware of a mumps outbreak that began in February in the Whistler, British Columbia (BC) area and is continuing in other areas of the lower BC mainland.
- Make sure that individuals planning travel to BC are up to date for vaccination against mumps.
- Children 12 months of age or older should have documentation of 2 doses of MMR vaccine (separated by at least 28 days).
- Teenagers and adults without evidence of measles immunity should have documentation of 2 appropriately spaced doses of MMR vaccine.
- For cases of suspected mumps.
- Use droplet precautions.
- Obtain a buccal swab for mumps PCR.
- Report within 24 hours to Public Health, preferably before patient is discharged from your facility or clinic:
 - Clark County Public Health: (360) 397-8182.
 - Cowlitz County Health Department: (360) 414-5599
 - Skamania County Community Health: (509) 427-3850
 - Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services (360) 795-6207
- Isolate ill individuals with suspected mumps for 5 days after onset of parotitis.

Background

The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) reports that a mumps outbreak that began in February 2011 and initially localized to Whistler is continuing with its epicenter in lower mainland BC. Most recent reports have been from Fraser, the region immediately east of Vancouver, BC. As of July 28th, 90 laboratory confirmed, 6 epidemiologically-linked confirmed and 37 clinical cases have been reported to BCCDC. Those at highest risk of infection are young adults who visit and have close contact with other young adults in the lower mainland BC area, as 80% percent of cases have been in the 18 to 39 year age group. Most cases are too old to have had the currently recommended 2 doses of mumps vaccine in childhood.

Mumps is characterized by acute, tender unilateral or bilateral parotitis lasting longer than 2 days without other apparent cause. Infection with mumps virus may present as aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, hearing loss, orchitis, oophoritis, parotitis or other salivary gland swelling, mastitis or

pancreatitis. Serology is unreliable for diagnosing mumps, especially in previously immunized individuals. **A buccal swab for mumps PCR is the best test to detect mumps.**

Resources

Public Health Mumps Resources including fact sheet and specimen collection instructions: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/cd> and click "M" for mumps.

- United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Mumps Clinical Questions and Answers: <http://www.cdc.gov/mumps/clinical/index.html>.

School and Child Care Immunization Exemptions

The text in bold typeface updates information we sent to providers in June.

On July 22, 2011, a new law **went** into effect in Washington State that could have the positive effect of boosting immunization rates among children. The law requires a licensed health care provider to sign the [Certificate of Exemption](#) for a parent or guardian to exempt their child from school and child care immunization requirements. The signature verifies that the provider gave the parent or guardian information about the benefits and risks of immunization. A parent or guardian can also turn in a signed letter from a health care provider stating the same information.

The law applies to exemptions requested after July 22, 2011. A health care provider doesn't need to sign the form for parents or guardians who demonstrate membership in a church or religious group that does not allow a health care provider to provide medical treatment to a child. **Other religious exemptions require a signed form.**

Health care providers who can sign the exemption form or write a letter include physicians (M.D.), physician assistants (P.A.), osteopaths (D.O.), naturopaths (N.D.), and advanced registered nurse practitioners (A.R.N.P.) who are currently licensed in Washington. These providers can sign the exemption form regardless of whether they give vaccinations or not. Signatures by registered nurses (R.N.) or licensed practical nurses (L.P.N.) are not acceptable.

The provider does not have to live or practice in Washington, but must have a Washington license in order to sign the exemption form. If a provider has a practice in Oregon, for example, but also holds a valid medical license in Washington, that provider can sign the exemption form to allow children to attend school in Washington. Oregon providers without Washington licenses who are asked to sign an exemption form should inform their patients that they will need to contact a licensed provider in Washington to sign the form.

A separate exemption form for each dose of a vaccine is not required. The form allows exemptions for each type of vaccine. Once an exemption is completed, it follows the child through their school even if they transfer from one school to another (e.g., from elementary to middle school). For more information, see the FAQs on the DOH website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/schools/exemption-FAQ.htm>.

The law doesn't define what benefit and risk information needs to be shared. The licensed health care provider signing the exemption form must decide what information to cover. Many providers already have this type of information. These resources are free and available on the Department of Health website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/exemption-info.htm>:

- [Plain Talk About Childhood Immunization](#) (Department of Health booklet in English and Spanish)
- [Questions and Answers](#) (Department of Health)

- [Vaccine Information Statements](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Facts About Childhood Vaccines and other materials](#) (Vaccine Education Center, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)

Office visits are not required before an exemption form gets signed. Providers can decide what they think is necessary. Some may want to discuss it with the parent or guardian face-to-face and ask they make an appointment. A provider may request the form be dropped off for a signature if they have already had this discussion or supplied them with information in the past. Either scenario is acceptable as long as the provider feels confident that the parent or guardian received the necessary information before he or she signs the form.

For more information about the new law, including [Frequently Asked Questions for Health Care Providers](#), see <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/exemption-info.htm>.