
July 20th, 2007

Dear University/College Students:

Re: MMR Vaccine for University/College Students in Nova Scotia

As you may be aware, Nova Scotia is in the midst of its third outbreak of mumps since 2005. The majority of mumps cases have been in young adults with almost 40% being university students.

For most people, mumps is a fairly mild disease, but some people may develop encephalitis, meningitis, arthritis and deafness. Some men develop painful, swollen testicles and in rare cases become infertile.

In Canada, people born after 1970 were likely offered a single dose of measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine as a young child. Those born after 1996 or 1997 (depending on the province where they were born) have routinely been offered a 2nd MMR dose at some time before entering elementary school.

Post-secondary students are at increased risk of getting measles, mumps or rubella, and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that students at post-secondary institutions should be offered a second dose of MMR vaccine if they have not already had two doses of vaccine.

As part of the response to the recent outbreaks of mumps in Nova Scotia, the provincial Department of Health Promotion and Protection has started a program to provide measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine to all Nova Scotians attending a university or college (both within and outside of Nova Scotia) - as well as to all students from outside of Nova Scotia attending universities and colleges in Nova Scotia.

Students who know that they have never had MMR vaccine should have 2 doses with at least 30 days between doses. Students who aren't sure if they have had MMR vaccine only need a single dose.

The only students who do not need a dose of MMR are those who have physician documentation of having previously received 2 doses of MMR and those who have physician documentation of having had all 3 of measles, mumps and rubella illnesses. Blood tests to check on your immune status to measles, mumps or rubella are not required or recommended.

The best time to be immunized with MMR vaccine is before you return to school this fall. In most provinces and territories you can get MMR vaccine from your doctor at no cost to yourself. I strongly encourage you to get an MMR vaccine this summer.

However, if you are unable to get immunized before returning to school there will be opportunities throughout the school year to get immunized on campus or through a doctor in Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,



Robert Strang MD, MHSc., FRCPC
A/Deputy Provincial Medical Officer of Health