

Global News put out a story on November 5, 2013 confirming that of the 18 cases of measles that have been reported in Alberta, all of them were not immunized. The measles vaccine has been around since 1963 and since then, the incidence of the disease has fallen 99% and has been considered an "extinct" disease. Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that causes symptoms such as runny nose, fever, cough, and rash. The virus causes damage to many of the body's cells (in the nose, throat, etc.) and also weakens the immune system of the person infected for months. Complications of this infection can be ear infections and pneumonia, due to the weakened immune system, as well as encephalitis (a very dangerous condition that causes inflammation of the brain). In rare cases, measles can trigger the development of a fatal brain disease SSPE that can have an onset years after the measles infection.

This news story is significant and should be considered a wake-up call for anyone who has had doubts about vaccinations in the past. It stresses the importance of the full series of immunizations in childhood. Alberta Health Services plans on targeting communities with low immunization numbers and encouraging parents and health care workers to have their children immunized. This particular story focuses on Alberta, but keep in mind that there has been at least 1 case reported in Saskatchewan as well.