

INTRODUCTION

The *Communicable Disease Report 1994-2003* focuses on influenza. As in past years the report also contains data on communicable diseases organized by mode of transmission and an appendix containing all communicable diseases reported in Peel and Ontario for which data were available.

Data for this report are mainly from the Reportable Diseases Information System (RDIS) with some influenza data originating from other sources. For more details please refer to the Data Sources and Methods section.

Communicable diseases are illnesses caused by living organisms or the toxins they produce. They are spread directly from an infected person, animal or environmental source. Spread can also occur indirectly by contaminated animals and objects.

The information contained in this report is presented as follows:

- A focus chapter on influenza
- An overview of the following groups of communicable diseases:
 - sexually transmitted and bloodborne diseases
 - vaccine preventable diseases
 - diseases spread by food and water
 - diseases spread by close personal contact
 - diseases spread by insects
- An Appendix containing tables with case counts and incidence rates for a more extensive list of communicable diseases reported in Peel and Ontario, listed in alphabetical order. Diseases not reported in Peel during the time period of this report were not included in the tables.

The *Communicable Disease Report 1994-2003* will highlight data on selected communicable diseases of public health importance because of their potential for spread to a large number of people and their ability to cause serious illness. Diseases meeting these criteria but which are rare in Peel are included in the appendix.

The *Communicable Disease Report 1994-2003* is intended to be a resource for Peel Health Department and staff, health and social service agencies, physicians and other health care providers, elected officials and those that provide programs and services to groups at risk for communicable diseases.