

INTRODUCTION

The *Communicable Disease 1995-2004* report is the latest in a series of annual reports on communicable diseases published by Peel Public Health. This report is part of Peel Public Health's ongoing series of health status reports describing the health of the region's population.

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

The *Communicable Disease 1995-2004* report highlights data on selected communicable diseases that are a public health concern 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. Data for this report are obtained through the Reportable Disease Information System (RDIS). For more details please refer to the Data Sources and Methods section.

The information contained in this report includes:

- An overview of the following groups of communicable diseases:
 - sexually transmitted and bloodborne infections
 - 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 all communicable diseases reported in Peel and Ontario for which data were available, listed in alphabetical order.

The *Communicable Disease 1995-2004* report is intended to be a resource for Peel Public Health, 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.