

INTRODUCTION

The Communicable Disease Report 2003 is the second of a series of annual reports on communicable diseases published by the Region of Peel Health Department. This report is part of the Health Department's ongoing series of health status reports describing the health of the region's population.

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 Communicable Disease Report 2003 contains a main section providing data on a selected list of communicable diseases organized by mode of transmission and an appendix containing all communicable diseases reported in Peel (1993 to 2002) and Ontario (1993 to 2000) for which data were available. Data for this report are mainly from the Reportable Disease Information System (RDIS). For more details please refer to the Data Sources and Methods section.

The information contained in the 2003 report includes:

- An overview of the following groups on 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
- The Appendix contains 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 (i.e. no cases reported from 1993 to 2002 – or earlier) were not included in the tables.

The Communicable Disease Report 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 2003 is intended to be a resource for the Health Department, 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.