

April 16, 2014

TO: Parents, Teachers and Staff

FROM: Scott W. Lindquist, MD, MPH

SUBJECT: **MEASLES CONFIRMED IN KITSAP COUNTY**

Last week, one case of measles was confirmed in an adult living in Kitsap County. During the past several weeks, there have been 12 confirmed cases of measles in Washington. Lab-confirmed cases have been identified since March 15 in Whatcom County, San Juan County and most recently, in Kitsap. I would like to take this opportunity to provide a brief overview of measles and review how to protect yourself and your family from becoming infected.

Cause

Measles is a respiratory disease caused by a virus that causes fever and a rash. Measles is highly contagious even before the rash starts and is easily spread when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes. If you're not vaccinated, you can get the measles just by walking into a room where someone with the disease has been in the past couple of hours.

Symptoms

Measles causes fever, runny nose, cough and a rash that begins on the head and then, extends downward covering the body. Symptoms begin seven-to-21 days after exposure and a person is contagious for about four-to-five days before the rash appears until four days afterward. People at highest risk from exposure to measles include those who are unvaccinated, pregnant women, infants under six months of age, and those with weakened immune systems.

Complications

Measles can be a serious disease, with 30% of reported cases experiencing one or more complications. About one out of 10 children with measles also gets an ear infection (including deafness), and up to one out of 20 gets pneumonia. About one out of 1,000 gets encephalitis, and one or two out of 1,000 die. While measles is almost gone from the United States, it still kills an estimated 164,000 people each year around the world. Complications from measles are more common among very young children (younger than five years) and adults (older than 20 years).

Transmission

Measles spreads through the air by breathing, coughing or sneezing. It is ***so contagious that anyone who is exposed to it and is not immune will probably get the disease.***

Protect Yourself and Your Family

The best way to protect yourself from getting measles is to be up-to-date on your immunizations

This is a good opportunity to review your child's and your own immunization records to be sure you are up-to-date on all the recommended vaccines. The questions below are specific to measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine.

- **At what age should the first dose of MMR be given?**

The first dose of MMR should be given on or after the child's first birthday; the recommended age range is from 12–15 months.

- **When should children get the second MMR shot?**

The second dose is usually given when the child is 4–6 years old, or before he or she enters kindergarten or first grade. However, the second dose can be given earlier as long as there has been an interval of at least 28 days since the first dose.

- **Which adolescents and adults should receive MMR vaccine?**

All unvaccinated adolescents without a valid contraindication to the vaccine should have documentation of two doses of MMR. All adults born in or after 1957 should also have documentation of vaccination or other evidence of immunity. Persons born before January 1, 1957 are considered immune to measles because of likely exposure to natural disease prior to widespread vaccination programs.

- **Which adults need two doses of MMR vaccine?**

Certain adults are at higher risk of exposure to measles, mumps, and/or rubella and may need a second dose of MMR unless they have other evidence of immunity; this includes adults who are:

- Students in postsecondary educational institutions;
- Healthcare personnel;
- Persons planning to travel internationally;
- People who received inactivated (killed) measles vaccine or measles vaccine of unknown type during 1963-1967 should be revaccinated with two doses of MMR vaccine.

If you have questions about immunizations and/or recommendations, please contact your primary care practitioner or the Kitsap Public Health District (360) 337-5235.