

Panhandle

Public Health District

For more information, contact: **Paulette Schnell 308-220-8895** or pschnell@pphd.ne.gov

April 1, 2024

For Immediate Release:

PPHD encourages everyone to be aware of their MMR vaccine status especially if traveling

As of March 28, 2024, a total of 97 measles cases were reported by 18 jurisdictions: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York City, New York State, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington.

Measles is a highly contagious disease with serious possible complications including hospitalization, long-term illness, and death. Someone who is infected can spread the disease to other people before noticing any symptoms, especially in the four days before and after the rash develops.

“Children ages one to four may have only had one dose of measles vaccine. It takes two doses to be considered fully vaccinated. Children at age four are eligible for their second Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) dose. You don’t have to wait until kindergarten to get that second dose. Getting the second MMR dose right at age four will offer a greater level of protection for your child,” said Paulette Schnell, PPHD Deputy Director of Clinical Services.

Schnell added, “Over 90% of the current measles outbreak cases are related to international travel. We encourage everyone to be aware of their vaccine status especially if traveling.”

If you are unsure if you or your family is current on their MMR vaccine, call PPHD at 308-633-2866 to visit with a Public Health Nurse. PPHD accepts most insurance and offers free Vaccines for Children (VFC) and Vaccines for Adults to support some vaccines. Walk-ins are welcome at our 18 West 16th, Scottsbluff location, Tuesdays through Fridays, 8:30am-4pm.

Measles Symptoms & Complications

Measles infection causes a rash to appear, alongside high fevers, diarrhea, coughing, runny nose, eye and ear infections. In severe cases, measles causes children’s brains to swell, leading to seizures, deafness, cognitive disability, and possibly death. About 1 in every 20 children with measles also contracts pneumonia, the top cause of pediatric death from measles, a serious respiratory illness. Measles even causes immune system weakening that can last weeks to years. A suppressed immune system increases the risk of infection due to secondary bacterial and other infections.

Why It’s Important to Get an MMR Vaccine

Medical and public health experts, including the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend that children and adolescents aged 6 months and older get an MMR vaccine to help protect them from serious illness. Children under five years of age, adults over 20 years of age,

pregnant people, and people with immunocompromised health are most at risk of measles complications.

Data shows that unvaccinated people have a very high likelihood, about 90% risk, that they will contract measles if exposed. Unvaccinated children who have not previously been infected are more likely to get infected and should avoid exposure.

- One in five children who contract measles will be hospitalized.
- One in 20 children who contract measles will develop pneumonia.
- One to three children who contract measles in 1,000 will die.

The MMR vaccine is highly effective. Individuals with a history of prior infection or vaccination who have received the full series of MMR vaccines are 97% protected and are unlikely to contract measles. It only takes a few days for antibodies to develop in response to the MMR vaccine. Within two to three weeks, the immune system is fully primed after vaccination.

This current measles outbreak is an evolving health concern, and we encourage people visit www.pphd.ne.gov or call 308-633-2866 with questions. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.ne.gov.