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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Upsurge in Measles Cases

Measles was declared eradicated in 2000 due to the advancement and citizen compliance of receiving vaccines.

In 2019 there is a significant upsurge of measles cases in the United States. From January 1 to April 11, 2019, 555 individual cases of measles have been confirmed in 20 states, with many states experiencing outbreaks defined as 3 or more cases. The majority of people who contracted measles were unvaccinated. Measles is still common in many parts of the world including some countries in Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. Those who are not vaccinated or otherwise immune who travel to these areas are at risk of contracting the disease and bringing the disease into the U.S. Measles can spread when it reaches people in the U.S. that are unvaccinated. In Illinois, there have been seven cases and two outbreaks in 2019 to date. All seven Illinois cases are no longer infectious.

“Due to the prevalence of Rubeola measles prior to 1957, those born before 1957 have presumed immunity. For those born after 1957, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is emphasizing the importance of being immunized against measles,” states Cindy Graves, RN, Director of Community Health and Prevention. “Those who have not been immunized should receive two doses of the MMR vaccine at least 28 days apart. This vaccine provides protection against three diseases: measles (Rubeola), mumps, and rubella (MMR) and is proven to be very safe and 97% effective in preventing measles after the recommended 2 doses.”

Typically, Rubeola measles starts with a fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, and sore throat, and is followed by a rash that spreads all over the body, most often starting on the head. The symptoms of measles generally appear seven to 14 days after a person is exposed but can appear up to 21 days after exposure. Patients are considered contagious from four days before to four days after the rash appears.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus, transmitted by direct contact with infectious droplets or by airborne spread when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the infected surface, then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth, they can become infected. Measles virus can remain infectious on surfaces and in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area.

“Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who have not been vaccinated and are therefore not immune will also become infected.

Infected people can spread measles to others from four days before they have symptoms through four days after symptoms subside, states Graves. “Especially of concern is the danger measles poses to children, pregnant women and immune-compromised people, who are at highest risk of an infection.”

Call the DeKalb County Health Department @ 815-748-2467 to schedule your appointment to receive your MMR vaccine or if you have questions related to the vaccine. Also visit www.cdc.gov/measles for more information.

For more information about the DeKalb County Health Department Services and highlights mentioned above, visit health.dekalbcounty.org or follow us on social media.

