

PRESS RELEASE

Health District Encourages Everyone to Check Measles Vaccination Status

SPOKANE, Wash. - Feb. 4, 2015 – With confirmation of measles virus in 14 states, including Washington, [Spokane Regional Health District](#) (SRHD) is advising individuals to check their children's and their own vaccination status and [verify](#) that they are up-to-date with the measles mumps rubella (MMR) vaccine.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. It spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. 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. About three out of 10 people who get measles will develop one or more complications including pneumonia, ear infections or diarrhea. One out of 1,000 children with measles will develop inflammation of the brain, and for every 1,000 children who get measles, one or two will die from it. Complications are more common in adults and young children.

Although no measles cases are confirmed in Spokane, the Washington State Department of Health reports four cases in western Washington. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 102 measles cases were reported in the month of January. Over 90 percent of these cases are linked to an ongoing outbreak in southern California and most of the people who got the measles were not vaccinated.

“We can expect to see many more cases of this preventable disease unless people take measures to prevent it,” said Dr. Joel McCullough, SRHD health officer. “This is a serious contagious disease and the message is absolutely critical that if you or your child is not vaccinated, you need to get vaccinated.”

In the United States, widespread use of measles vaccine led to a greater than 99 percent reduction in measles cases compared with the pre-vaccine era. But an increasing number of people are abstaining from recommended vaccinations like MMR. During the 2013-14 school year in Spokane County, only 82 percent of kids entering kindergarten had completed the MMR vaccination series.

“These unvaccinated students could be at risk, as this measles outbreak continues to spread across the country,” Dr. McCullough continues. “All kids should get two doses of MMR vaccine; the first at 12-15 months of age and the second at 4-6 years. The two doses are 99 percent effective.”

Concludes Dr. McCullough, “To protect your children, yourself, and others in the community, it is important to be vaccinated against measles. You may think your chance of getting measles is small, but the disease still exists and can still infect anyone who is not protected.”

According to CDC, the safety record of the MMR vaccine is good. Most children who get the vaccine do not have any problems. As with all medicine, some side effects – usually very minor – can happen, including mild pain where the shot is given, fever, a mild rash, or swelling of the neck or cheek.

Adults should receive at least one dose of measles vaccine, unless they were previously immunized, were born prior to 1957, were previously diagnosed with measles by a doctor, or have other medical contraindications for the vaccine. Adults who are unsure whether they received the vaccine can still get one, since there is no harm in getting it a second time. Pregnant women should wait until after giving birth to get the vaccine.

If an individual is experiencing symptoms of measles (high fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, rash) and believes they may have been exposed, they should contact their health care provider. Although no treatment can get rid of an established measles infection, some over-the-counter medications may be recommended for comfort. Some measures can also be taken to protect vulnerable individuals who have been exposed to the virus.

The health district also encourages health care providers to ensure all patients are up-to-date on MMR vaccine, as well as consider measles a diagnosis when appropriate.

If an individual or a child's vaccination records show a need for updates, they should call their health care provider.

For more information about measles and MMR vaccine visit [cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html) or [srhd.org](https://www.srhd.org). Spokane Regional Health District's web site also offers comprehensive, updated information about Spokane Regional Health District and its triumphs in making Spokane a safer and healthier community. Become a fan of SRHD on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/srhd) to receive local safety and wellness tips. You can also follow us on Twitter [@spokanehealth](https://twitter.com/spokanehealth).

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