

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 04-02-19

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Health Department: Get vaccinated against measles

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Southeast Michigan is currently experiencing a measles outbreak with 29 cases in Oakland County and one case in Wayne County. Infected individuals range in age from 1 to 63. While there are currently no cases in Clinton, Gratiot or Montcalm Counties, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department is urging residents to make sure they are up-to-date on their vaccinations to help prevent further spread of the disease.

Measles is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable disease that can have lifelong health complications. Measles is spread by direct person-to-person contact and through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. The virus can live up to two hours in the air where an infected person was present. It is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person will also get the disease unless they are vaccinated or immune. A person is considered immune if they have had the disease, been vaccinated or born before 1957.

Symptoms of measles usually appear 7 to 14 days after exposure and can include:

- High fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Tiny white spots on the inner cheeks, gums and roof of the mouth
- A red rash that starts on the face and moves down the body

Infected individuals are contagious from four days before the rash appears until four to five days after the rash appears.

Those at highest risk for severe illness and complications from measles include:

- Infants and children younger than 5 years
- Adults 20 years and over
- Pregnant women
- Those with compromised immune systems

Vaccination is the best defense against measles. One dose of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is approximately 95% effective at preventing measles and two doses are approximately 97% effective. In those rare instances when a vaccinated individual gets the disease, they will experience much milder symptoms and will be much less likely to spread the disease.

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2- Measles

The MMR vaccine requires two doses. The first should be given to children between 12 and 15 months of age with a second dose given between ages 4 and 6 years. Infants 6 to 11 months old are recommended to receive a dose of MMR prior to traveling internationally. The vaccine is effective within 72 hours of exposure to prevent illness. You cannot get measles from the vaccine.

The measles vaccine is available at all three branches of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. Call the branch nearest you to make an appointment:

Clinton County: 989-224-2195

Gratiot County: 989-875-3681

Montcalm County: 989-831-5237

The vaccine is also available at most pharmacies and your doctor's office.

If you believe you may have been exposed to measles, contact your doctor by phone and limit contact with others until you find out if you are contagious.

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*Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.
We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.
Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes*