



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT for this Release:
Krista Dommer, Coordinator
Public Information and Communication
Office Phone: (209) 468-3571
Email: kdommer@sjcphs.org

TIPS TO KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR COMMUNITY FREE FROM MEASLES
BE INFORMED, GET IMMUNIZED, AND CHECK YOUR VACCINATION STATUS

STOCKTON, CA (March 26, 2019) – Recently, measles has been given a lot of attention. With reports of large measles outbreaks in Washington state and Oregon to the revelations of sporadic cases of measles throughout California, measles remains in the public's eye. At this time, San Joaquin County Public Health Services reports no confirmed cases of measles.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease with transmission occurring when an infected patient coughs or sneezes. Measles starts with high fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes and sore throat. A rash then breaks out three to five days later. Affected persons are infectious 4 days prior to the rash and up to 4 days after the rash appears.

Measles can be a serious illness in all age groups but children younger than five years and older adults are more likely to suffer from serious complications. Serious complications include pneumonia (1 out of 20 measles cases in young children) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain - affecting 1 out of 1000 measles cases in children).

While San Joaquin County Public Health Services is concerned about each and every reported case of suspected measles, we want to emphasize that the risk of infection from a measles case directly depends on an individual's immunity to measles. To put it simply, if individuals are protected from measles, then the risk of acquiring measles from an infectious patient approaches zero.

The Centers of Disease Control (CDC) considers one protected from measles if an individual has written documentation demonstrating at least one of the following:

1. Received two doses of measles containing vaccine (e.g. MMR) AND you are:
 - a. A school aged child (grades K-12)
 - b. An adult who will be in a high risk setting for measles transmission (e.g. students in college/university, healthcare personnel and international travelers)
2. Received one dose of measles containing vaccine AND you are:
 - a. A Pre-K aged child
 - b. An adult not in a high risk setting for measles transmission
3. Confirmed prior measles infection
4. Confirmed immunity to measles
5. Born before 1957

If you are unable to find or provide written documentation of immunity, you can either get vaccinated with Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine or you may have a doctor perform a blood test to determine whether or not you are immune to measles.

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It should be noted that roughly 3% of people who have been vaccinated can still get measles if exposed to the virus. In these rare cases, the measles infection is much less severe. Furthermore, fully vaccinated people who get measles are much less likely to spread the disease to other people, including people who cannot get vaccinated or have weakened immune systems.

Why do we need to discuss protection from measles? The threat of measles is ever-present. Since measles is common in many countries, international travelers will continue to bring measles into the United States. Confirming immunity or getting vaccinated will have an immediate effect of protecting you and your family and friends even if you are exposed to a confirmed case of measles. Moreover, statistical analyses show that if there are a sufficient number of immunized individuals in the community (so-called herd immunity), then a confirmed case of measles CANNOT lead to an outbreak. Confirming immunity and getting vaccinated protects both you as an individual AND the community as a whole.

The bottom line is that you, the public, determine your fate with regards to measles infection. The time to confirm immunity to measles, or to get vaccinated, is now. By taking this action, if a suspected case of measles is reported in the news, you can rest assured that you, your family and friends should be protected from measles. In this day of social media awareness, there is no excuse not to become involved in getting vaccinated against measles - think of the opportunity to confirm immunity as the ultimate crowd-source experience!

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