

**County of Mendocino
HHSA, Community Health Services
(Public Health Branch)
Communicable Disease Program**

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te: May 2, 2011

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To: Newspapers and Radio

From: Erika Nosera, Public Health Nurse

Re: Measles Outbreak Reaches Mendocino County

As of April 2011, three confirmed cases of measles have been reported on the coast in Mendocino County according to Erika Nosera, Public Health Nurse with Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Public Health Branch. Since January 2011, eleven cases of measles have been reported in California, and a nationwide increase in the numbers of reported measles cases has been noted this year. Nearly all cases are linked to travelers to or from Europe or Asia or their contacts, with over 5,000 cases alone reported this year in France, including one patient who died and eight with neurological complications.

The first measles case in Mendocino County was a French traveler who became ill while visiting the Mendocino Coast and whose infection spread to as many as many as two unimmunized county residents.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease that is spread through the air when someone who is ill with the disease coughs or sneezes. In indoor settings, the

virus can stay in the air for as long as two hours after the infected person has left the area. Symptoms begin with a fever that lasts a couple of days followed by a cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes and a rash. The rash typically appears first on the face, along the hairline, and behind the ears and then affects the rest of the body. Infected people are usually contagious for about eight days: four days before their rash starts and four days after. Complications can include diarrhea, ear infection, and pneumonia, and death can occur from severe complications. Children younger than age five and adults over 20 are more susceptible to complications from measles.

If you have a fever and rash illness which may be measles, it is important that you call your doctor or clinic first and NOT enter a health care facility waiting room where you could potentially infect others. You can also contact the HHSA Public Health Branch and speak to a Public Health Nurse at (707) 472-2713.

“We want to do everything we can to avoid disease outbreaks. But when one happens, we must do everything possible to limit the disease from spreading,” said Noser. “Of course our best defense is to properly vaccinate all children so that outbreaks are less likely to occur. Vaccinating against measles is both safe and highly effective. It’s the disease that is dangerous.”

Children should get their first dose of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine at 12 months of age or later. The second dose of MMR is usually administered

before the child begins kindergarten. Measles can infect anyone who is susceptible, including adults. Anyone born since 1957 who has not had two doses of vaccine may still be vulnerable to measles and should ask their doctor about getting immunized.

The last time California experienced a severe measles epidemic due to an imported case and due to low vaccination rates was 1988 to 1990 when 16,400 Californians contracted measles, 3,390 people were hospitalized and 75 died.

For more information about measles, visit www.getimmunizedca.org or www.cdc.gov .

You may also contact the HHSA Public Health Branch and ask to speak to a Public Health Nurse at (707) 472-2713 or toll-free countywide at 1-800-734-7793.