



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Investigates First Measles Case in the State Since 2001

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BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health has advised health care providers statewide of a laboratory-confirmed case of measles, identified in an unvaccinated individual from Southeastern Vermont. The Health Department investigated the limited exposures that were identified in Vermont, and no additional cases have been identified.

The last measles case reported in Vermont was 10 years ago.

“Every child in Vermont who is eligible should be vaccinated against measles to avoid illness and the very serious consequences that may occur with measles,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD.

Measles is a vaccine-preventable disease that, while uncommon in the United States, resurged in some areas of the nation and across Europe this year. In the U.S., cases have been reported in Minnesota, Utah, Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island.

There have been 118 cases of measles reported in the U.S. through May 20 of this year, and 40 percent were hospitalized. Many measles cases reported in the United States are due to exposures from other countries. France is currently experiencing a large measles outbreak. Of the 10,000 cases reported in France during the first four months of 2011, there were 12 cases of encephalitis, a complication that often results in permanent brain damage, 360 cases of severe measles pneumonia, and six measles-related deaths.

Measles is highly contagious and causes fever, cough and a rash. The virus that causes measles can be spread from person to person through the air. Anyone with measles can spread the disease starting four days before the rash begins until four days after it appears. At first, measles looks and feels like a cold. Cough, high fever, runny nose, and red, watery eyes are common. A few days later, a red, blotchy rash starts on the face, then spreads to the rest of the body.

Children in Vermont are required to have two doses of measles vaccine before enrolling in Kindergarten through 12th grade. Children 15 months and older who attend licensed childcare or preschool in Vermont are required to have one dose of the measles vaccine. Students attending Vermont post-secondary schools are required to have two doses of measles vaccine or laboratory results proving they are immune. However, Vermont is one of 16 states where parents who claim a philosophical exemption may enroll children in child care or school without being immunized.

Although measles vaccination rates for young children in Vermont are reported to be 92 percent, that may not be high enough to prevent measles from spreading. Measles is highly contagious and vaccination rates of 95 percent or higher are often needed to provide herd or community immunity, which limits the spread of the disease within a community.

For more information on childhood immunizations visit healthvermont.gov.

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