

To: Vermont School Nurses
From: Laura Ann Nicolai, MPH, Epidemiology Program Chief

Measles Outbreak Awareness

The United States is currently experiencing a large measles outbreak. From January 1 to February 13, 2015, 141 people from 17 states and Washington DC were reported to have measles. The majority of people who got measles were unvaccinated. Most cases [113 cases (80%)] are part of an ongoing multi-state outbreak linked to an amusement park in California. To date, no cases have been reported in Vermont; however, two cases have been reported in New York.

Measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, but remains endemic in many parts of the world, including popular tourist destinations. Travelers continue to bring measles into the U.S. where it can easily spread within communities with low vaccination rates. The current multi-state outbreak underscores the ongoing risk of measles transmission and the need for high measles vaccine coverage.

Actions Requested:

For students who present with a febrile rash that you suspect is measles:

- Immediately remove the student from the classroom to a private room with the door closed. Do not allow the symptomatic student to stay in the classroom or other public areas such as the school lobby.
- Contact the Health Department immediately at 802-863-7240 to report the case and for additional guidance on control measures.

Measles is a highly infectious viral disease with an incubation period of approximately 10 days (range seven to 21 days) from exposure to rash onset. Patients who have measles are considered infectious from four days before through four days after rash onset. Transmission is primarily person-to-person via large respiratory droplets. Airborne transmission via aerosolized droplets has occurred within shared air space for up to two hours after an infectious person with measles has occupied the space.

Measles is characterized by fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or more, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis. After three to seven days of illness, this stage progresses to a maculopapular rash that begins on the face and generalizes to the rest of the body.

Additional Guidance for School Nurses:

1. Review student vaccination records and ensure all students are up to date on MMR vaccine.

- Two doses of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine are required for all children entering kindergarten. The doses must be administered after 12 months of age and must be separated by at least 28 days.

2. Be aware of measles vaccination rates at your school and of exclusion policies for non-immune students.

- Aggregate immunization rates for each Vermont school are available on the Health Department website: at <http://healthvermont.gov/hc/imm/ImmSurv.aspx>
- A student may be admitted to school provisionally if a health care provider indicates the student is in the process of complying with all immunization requirements. Such provisional admission shall be for a reasonable length of time – but not more than six months.
- Students who are not in compliance with all immunization requirements or eligible for provisional admittance may not be allowed to enter or remain in school. The student's parent or guardian must receive written notification by mail from the school or in person that the student is not in compliance, as well as the steps needed to comply.
- If a parent or guardian chooses to exempt their child on religious or philosophic grounds, they must sign an exemption form each year acknowledging they have read evidence-based information regarding immunizations, and are aware of the risks associated with not vaccinating their children.
- In the event of a measles outbreak in a Vermont school, any student unimmunized for measles, regardless of reason, may be excluded from school for the duration of the outbreak.

Additional information about measles and measles vaccination is available at the Vermont Department of Health website: <http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/measles/Measles.aspx> and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/>

Immunization resources for school nurses regarding Vermont school entry requirements are also on the Health Department website: <http://healthvermont.gov/hc/imm/schoolentry.aspx>

HAN Message Type Definitions

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service Message: Provides general correspondence from VDH, which is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.

You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification data base. If you have a different or additional e-mail address or fax number that you would like us to use please contact your Health Alert Network (HAN) Coordinator at: vthan@state.vt.us or Lee.Dorf@state.vt.us.
