



Humboldt County
Department of Health and Human Services

Phillip R. Crandall, Director

Public Health Branch
529 I Street Eureka, CA 95501
Phone (707) 445-6200 Fax (707) 445-6097

Date: June 8, 2011

Media contact: Mike Goldsby, 268-2167 or mgoldsby@co.humboldt.ca.us

Measles case confirmed in Humboldt County

Public Health officials investigating possible exposures

A 22-year-old Humboldt County woman who had travelled abroad has tested positive for measles—the county’s first documented case in more than a decade.

The patient is recovering, but may have inadvertently exposed others to the illness. The Public Health Branch of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services has identified specific locations and times at which contact may have occurred.

On Friday, May 20, the patient was at China Buffet on Fourth Street in Eureka. Anyone who was at the restaurant between the hours of 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. is advised to watch carefully for symptoms of measles until June 10.

Also, anyone who was at the Hometown Buffet in the Bayshore Mall on Monday, May 23, after 5 p.m., and again on Tuesday, May 24, between the hours of 10:45 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. is advised to watch carefully for symptoms of measles until June 14.

Initial symptoms of measles are similar to those of influenza and the common cold. They include fever, cough, runny nose, and red and watery eyes. The rash associated with measles does not develop until days later.

People who were at either of those locations during those times and develop these symptoms are asked to stay home from work or school, and contact their medical provider by phone to avoid exposure of medical personnel.

Residents without a medical provider are asked to phone the Public Health Branch at 445-6200.

Measles is highly contagious. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if one person has measles, 90 percent of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected with the virus.

The primary method of transmission is coughing and sneezing. The CDC states that infected droplets can get into other people's noses and throats, and the virus can live on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours.

Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Ann Lindsay reiterated that people who may have measles should isolate themselves immediately. "If you think you may have measles, you should not go out in public, and you should stay away from family members until cleared by a medical provider," Lindsay said.

Public Health officials are conducting a thorough investigation to identify additional exposures to the patient. Anyone determined to have had possible contact with the patient will be notified directly. The patient has cooperated fully with the investigation. To date, no one known associated with her is exhibiting symptoms of measles.

While measles is rare in the U.S., there have been 3,500 cases reported in Europe just in the first five months of this year.

"Now is a good time to make sure you are fully immunized against measles, with two doses of the measles vaccine, especially if you are travelling out of the country," Lindsay said.

People born before 1957 are generally considered to be immune to measles. In extremely rare cases, immune or immunized persons can become infected. However, vaccination remains the best defense.

Public Health officials have confirmed that there is a sufficient supply of measles vaccine to meet an anticipated spike in demand. For information about getting vaccinated, contact your medical provider or phone the Public Health Branch at 445-6200.

- # # # -