

News Release

Shelby County Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS IDENTIFY TWO MEASLES CASES

MEMPHIS – Shelby County Health Department (SCHD) officials have identified two confirmed and unrelated cases of the measles and are urging residents to make sure their vaccinations are up-to-date and to be aware of the signs and symptoms of measles.

Measles is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable viral infection that starts with a high fever, runny nose, cough and red eyes, followed a few days later by a rash that starts on the head and gradually moves down the body. The rash illness lasts about a week. It is usually a relatively mild illness but can result in complications, including pneumonia or inflammation of the brain, that require hospitalization. People who contract the measles virus can spread the infection for four days before developing a rash and for four days after the rash starts. Measles can spread easily through the air to people who are not vaccinated or who have not had measles illness before.

SCHD is working with area clinicians and physicians to identify people who may have developed the illness after exposure to these two unrelated cases and to minimize the risk of exposure to additional people. Additionally, SCHD is working to identify any individuals who have been in contact with the cases. People who experience measles symptoms and have not been vaccinated should contact their healthcare provider by phone to arrange to evaluate their illness in a way that does not expose other patients to infection.

(More)

Most people over the age of one are immune to measles. Children normally receive their first dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine after their first birthday. One dose of vaccine will protect 19 out of 20 people. More than 99% of people who have had two doses of measles vaccine are immune. Almost everyone born before 1957 experienced measles illness in childhood and do not need to be routinely vaccinated. Vaccination against measles is required in Tennessee for daycare, school and college attendance. Adults who are unsure of their vaccination history can be vaccinated.

Protect Yourself and Your Family from Measles:

- Babies should receive the first measles vaccine on or just after their first birthday. Children older than 12 months of age who have not yet received a measles vaccine (given as MMR) should be vaccinated as soon as possible.
- Ensuring everyone in the family is immune is the best way to protect children younger than one year of age who are too young to receive the MMR vaccine.
- Two doses of measles vaccine are required for best protection. Children usually get the second measles shot at four to six years of age before going to school, but this dose can be given as little as one month after the first dose, if preferred.
- In general, adults born in 1957 or later who have never had measles or MMR vaccine should receive at least one dose of MMR.
- People who work in healthcare settings where they have contact with patients should have had two doses of MMR or laboratory proof of immunity.
- Vaccinations are very safe and are the only way to ensure protection against measles. The benefits far outweigh any risks. Side effects are usually mild, such as soreness where the shot was given.
- In addition to being protected at home, be sure you and your family are fully vaccinated prior to international travel: measles is not uncommon in many other countries.
- The MMR vaccine is available from many primary care providers and from the Shelby County Health Department.

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