



HEALTH NEWS FROM DR. YU

Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department

Measles Can Still Cause Misery

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Since March, there have been at least 44 cases of measles reported from British Columbia, Canada. Cases have also been reported from King County, Washington with other potential cases under investigation. The measles outbreak is thought to have arrived here with at least 2 foreign visitors during the Winter Olympics. What most of these cases have in common is that those infected were unimmunized or under immunized – they have had only 1 MMR (Measles-Mumps-Rubella) vaccine. Most cases in the USA are due to exposure to cases in children adopted from overseas or from unimmunized travelers returning from a trip. Local health care providers have been alerted to look for possible measles cases.

Children can get the MMR vaccine from their primary care practice. The first dose is usually given at 12 to 15 months of age, and a booster usually at age 4 – 6, prior to school entry. Adults who have not been immunized can check with their primary care doctor. This is wise to do if you are traveling out of the US,, including to Canada, right now.

- Five pharmacies in Thurston County are set up to give vaccinations (please call first): Tim's Pharmacy in Yelm; Sav-on Pharmacy in the Tumwater Albertson's; Fred Meyer pharmacies in Lacey and Tumwater; and Safeway Pharmacy in Tumwater.
- The Evergreen State College Health Center offers vaccines to registered students.
- Group Health Cooperative has travel vaccines for their members.

The Thurston County Travel Clinic web site keeps an up-to-date list with phone numbers, call 360-867-2539 or www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/personalhealth/clinics/travelclinic.html

How do I know I have measles?

The first symptoms appear about 10 to 14 days after exposure. It starts with a runny nose, watery red eyes (sensitive to light), cough, and increasing high fever for 3 – 4 days. When the fever “breaks”, a raised, red rash starts on the face and spreads down the body and out to the arms and legs. The rash usually lasts 4 to 7 days.

Can it be serious?

A few people have serious problems: About 1 out of 10 children with measles also get an ear infection, and up to 1 out of 20 get pneumonia. About 1 out of 1,000 get encephalitis, and 1 or 2 out of 1,000 die.

How does it spread from person to person?

Measles is easily spread from person to person by droplets in the air and can remain infectious once it lands on a surface for up to two hours.

How long will you be contagious and what should you do?

People with measles are contagious from 4 days before the rash breaks out until at least 4 days after the rash begins. If you think you have measles, go to your primary care provider with another person who is not sick. Wait in the car while they explain that you have a rash and may be contagious.

If I was exposed, when would I get sick?

A person who hasn't been vaccinated against measles can become sick and get symptoms about 10 days after being exposed to the disease. The illness can last from 1 to 2 weeks.

I had measles as a child, can I get it again?

People who had measles as a child will not get it again. If you were born before 1956, you are likely to have had measles as a child.

- Want to read more on the web? Center for Disease Control web site for up-to-date accurate information. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/faqs-dis-vac-risks.htm

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