



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kent County Health Department Urges Vaccination Against Measles

GRAND RAPIDS – Public health officials across Michigan continue to monitor an increasing number of measles cases in the Southeast part of the state. While there are no current cases in Kent County, the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is urging vaccination against the disease to those who are not vaccinated or otherwise immune to Measles.

Measles is a very contagious disease that can have lifelong health complications. Measles is spread through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. The virus can live for up to two hours in the air. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person will also get the disease unless they are vaccinated or immune. A person who has had the disease in the past, has been vaccinated, or who was born before 1957 is considered to be immune.

Symptoms of the measles usually appear 10 – 12 days after exposure. Early symptoms of the measles include fever, rash, cough, runny nose, and watery eyes. Rash and fever are the defining symptoms of measles and usually occur four days following the early symptoms. The rash generally starts on the face and proceeds down the body and can persist for several days.

Infected individuals are contagious from four days before the rash appears until four to five days after it becomes visible.

People who are at highest risk for severe illness include:

- Infants and children younger than 5 years
- Adults 20 years or over
- Pregnant women
- People with compromised immune systems

“The best way for a person to protect themselves against measles is by getting the MMR vaccine,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for KCHD. The MMR vaccine which prevents measles, mumps and rubella is about 97% effective for those who have had both doses of the vaccine. “In those rare instances when a vaccinated individual gets the disease, they will experience much milder symptoms and will be much less likely to spread measles,” adds London.

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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The MMR vaccine requires two doses. The first should be given to children between 12 and 15 months of age with a second dose given between ages 4 and 6 years. Infants 6 – 11 months old who will be travelling internationally are recommended to receive a dose of MMR prior to travel. Even without a second dose the first vaccine is about 93% effective.

Adults born after 1957 who have not been vaccinated should receive both doses 28 days apart. Adults who are unsure of their vaccination status should contact their primary healthcare provider.

KCHD has MMR vaccine available at all four of its clinic locations. These vaccines are available by appointment only. Appointments can be made by calling 616-632-7200.

People can also contact their primary healthcare provider for vaccination information.

People who believe that they may have been exposed to measles should limit their contact with others until a diagnosis is confirmed. Contact your primary care physician by telephone or utilize telemedicine technology to consult with your provider.

More information about measles in Michigan can be found [here](#).

Information about measles from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be found [here](#).

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