July 2019

**Keep Campers Safe from Measles**

*A message from the Washington State Department of Health to Summer Camp Directors:*

Our state has had two outbreaks of measles totaling over 80 cases this year, the most since 1990. Cases have continued to occur even within the past few weeks. We suggest you ensure that campers, volunteers, and staff of all ages are up to date with the recommended number of MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine doses for the best protection.

We want to alert you to the signs of measles and what you can do to protect yourself, campers, and staff from this serious disease.

**What is measles?**

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. It can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children even with modern medical care available in the U.S. In rare cases, it can be deadly. It can happen any time of the year, and in addition to death, it can cause other serious complications such as pneumonia and brain damage. It is spread when a person with measles breathes out, coughs, or sneezes. The virus stays in the air and can infect people for up to two hours after an infected person has left the room. People with measles are contagious as early as four days before they have a rash and for up to four days after the rash appears, so those who are infected can spread measles before they know they have it. Children under age five are the most likely to have serious health complications from measles, but complications can occur in any person who has measles.

For the vast majority of people, getting the MMR vaccine is much safer than getting measles. It is highly effective and protects over 95 percent of people who have both recommended doses.

**What are the symptoms?**

Measles symptoms typically include fever, coughing, runny nose, red and watery eyes, and tiredness for two to four days, followed by a rash that usually starts on the face while the fever is still present and spreads downward over the entire body. Symptoms of measles generally last from seven to ten days. Complications can include pneumonia, brain damage, blindness, deafness, and death.

People with suspected measles should be kept away from other campers and staff until they can be seen by a healthcare provider and evaluated for measles. It’s important not to spread measles to others.
How can I protect campers and staff?

- Provide measles and vaccine information to parents/guardians of your campers. A “Measles basic information” flyer in more than a dozen languages can be found at www.doh.wa.gov/measles.
- Make sure you know if your staff and campers have been vaccinated.
- If you or your staff do not think you have ever received the MMR vaccine, contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible to get immunized, or get a blood test to see if you are immune to measles. Staff vaccinated in Washington can check their status at www.doh.wa.gov/immsrecords.
- If you think a camper or staff member may have measles, isolate them from others to prevent the disease from spreading, and have them get evaluated by a healthcare provider immediately. They should call their provider before going in.
- Remember that measles can stay in the air of a room for up to two hours after an infected person has left the space, so people should not be allowed in a space for several hours after an infected (or possibly infected) person has been there.
- Tell people who may have been exposed to measles to check their immunization status and call their healthcare provider for advice if they have not received the recommended number of dose(s). Remember that anyone who was around the infected person up to four days before the rash appeared could have been exposed.
- Make sure campers know it is important to tell you if they feel ill.
- Spread the word that vaccinating against measles is important. Children are recommended to have one dose of MMR vaccine at 12-15 months old and a second dose between four and six years old. Anyone older than this with fewer than two doses should be encouraged to see their healthcare provider to discuss whether they should get a dose of MMR.

Where can campers and staff get vaccinated?

Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for children through age 18. These vaccines are available from healthcare providers across the state. Providers may charge an office visit fee and an administration fee to give the vaccine, but people who cannot afford the administration fee can ask to have it waived. Families who do not have a provider can call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or go to www.parenthelp123.org to find a provider or immunization clinic.

Most insurance companies cover recommended vaccines for adults. Washington also provides recommended vaccines to adults who do not have health insurance. Learn more about adult immunizations. Vaccines for adults are available at many clinics, doctors’ offices, and pharmacies, or go to VaccineFinder.org to search for a location near you.

For more information or to ask questions about measles, email immunenurses@doh.wa.gov or visit the Washington State Department of Health at www.doh.wa.gov/measles.

Sincerely,

Kathy Lofy, MD
State Health Officer