



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
June 13, 2011

For More Information, Contact:
Abbi Pierce
Immunization Surveillance Coordinator
Division of Disease Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 800.472.2180
E-mail: apierce@nd.gov

First Measles Case Identified in North Dakota Since 1987
Department of Health Reminds North Dakotans About the Importance of Vaccination

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is reporting the first case of measles in the state since 1987. The case occurred in an unvaccinated adult male in his 50s from Cass County. The case most likely contracted measles on an airline flight. He was not in North Dakota while contagious.

Measles is a virus that causes rash, cough, runny nose, eye irritation and fever. It can lead to ear infection, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and death. All children are recommended to be vaccinated against measles at ages 12 to 15 months and 4 to 6 years. Measles is included in a combination vaccine with mumps and rubella (known as MMR vaccine). All adults born in 1957 or later should have at least one dose of MMR vaccine. All health-care workers should have two doses of MMR vaccine.

“Measles can be a severe, life-threatening illness,” said Abbi Pierce, immunization surveillance coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health. “This case serves as a reminder that measles cases can and still do occur in the United States and even in North Dakota. Measles is a disease that reappears when immunization coverage rates fall, so getting yourself and your loved ones immunized is a safe and effective way to protect yourself against this disease.”

During 2001 to 2008, the United States had about 58 cases of measles reported annually. Between January 1 and May 20, 2011, 118 cases of measles already were reported in the United States. Almost 90 percent of cases have occurred in people who have not been vaccinated. Forty percent of cases have required hospitalization.

– more –

“As immunization rates decline, vaccine preventable diseases increase. Measles is extremely contagious and requires high rates of immunization in the community to prevent disease,” said Pierce.

Currently, North Dakota’s rate for MMR vaccination of infants is 93.6 percent, compared to the United States average of 90.4 percent. North Dakota’s rates for MMR vaccination for kindergarten entry for the 2010-2011 school year was 91.96 percent. The goal is at least 95 percent.

For more information about measles or immunizations, contact Abbi Pierce, North Dakota Department of Health, at 1.800.472.2180, or visit our website at www.ndhealth.gov/immunize.

– 30 –

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.