



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
April 27, 2011

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Increasing Cases of Measles Reported in the United States
Department of Health Reminds Parents of the Importance of Vaccinating Their Children

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is reminding parents of the importance of vaccinations as measles cases are on the rise in the United States and outbreaks are ongoing in numerous states, including Minnesota.

In Hennepin County, Minn., currently 21 cases of measles have been confirmed with cases ranging in age from 4 months to 51 years old. Seventeen of the 21 cases are linked to a single case that acquired the infection while in Kenya. There have been three other cases. One acquired the illness in Florida, one in India and the third has an unknown infection source. Of the 21 cases, seven were too young to be vaccinated, eight were of age but were not vaccinated, one was vaccinated, one was vaccinated but prior to the recommended age and the other four cases have unknown vaccination status. There have been 13 hospitalizations and no deaths.

“Measles can be a severe, life-threatening illness,” said Abbi Pierce, immunization surveillance coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health. “This outbreak serves as a reminder that measles cases can and still do occur in the United States. 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.”

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.

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This year, National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) is being held April 23 through 30. NIIW is an annual observance that emphasizes the need to fully immunize children 24 months and younger against 14 vaccine-preventable diseases. The North Dakota Department of Health along with other local, state and national health-care providers would like to remind parents and caregivers of the importance of immunizing children according to the recommended immunization schedule. Not only does timely immunization protect small children, but it also protects the community around them including those who cannot be vaccinated.

For more information on NIIW or where to get immunizations for your children, contact Abbi Pierce, North Dakota Department of Health, at 1.800.472.2180, or visit our website at www.ndhealth.gov/immunize.

– 30 –

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