

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

February 20, 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Over the past few months, measles has been reported among travelers who visited Florida. All had either an unknown or no history of measles vaccinations. While there are no confirmed cases of measles among Florida residents at this time, people who may have been exposed to the infected travelers are being notified and counseled.

This letter is intended to inform you about measles disease; steps to take to protect your child and others from becoming infected with measles; and what would occur if a case was identified at your child's school.

Measles is a highly contagious disease that can spread quickly through the air by breathing, coughing or sneezing. Almost all individuals who have **not** had the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) shot will get measles if they are exposed. Measles symptoms generally begin approximately seven to 14 days after a person is exposed to someone with measles, but it can take as long as 21 days from exposure for the symptoms to start. Symptoms include: fever, rash, cough, runny nose and eyes, and fatigue. The rash usually begins on a person's face at the hairline and spreads downward. Measles can be transmitted to others as early as four days before the rash becomes visible to four days after the rash appears. About three out of 10 people who get measles will develop one or more complications including pneumonia, ear infections or diarrhea.

The measles virus can survive for up to two hours on surfaces or in an airspace where the infected person coughed or sneezed. Transmission of measles to unvaccinated individuals may happen even after the infected person has left the room.

If you are concerned that your child may have become infected and is displaying measles-like symptoms you should contact your healthcare provider immediately. In an effort to avoid spreading the disease to others, make sure your child:

- Wears a mask when seeking health care if he or she has a rash or cough. If possible, call ahead to arrange for a separate waiting room, away from other patients
- Avoids touching his or her eyes, nose, and mouth
- Washes his or her hands often with soap and water
- Covers his or her mouth when he or she coughs or sneezes
- Stays at home and avoids contact with others
- Is up to date on immunizations

The MMR shot is the best way to protect against measles. Those who are fully immunized have

very little risk of developing measles. Ideally, children should receive two doses, the first dose at 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose at four to six years of age. However, children and adults who have **not** received MMR vaccines in the past can also choose to get vaccinated. Information regarding adult vaccines and vaccines for children is available through your doctor's office or your local health department clinic.

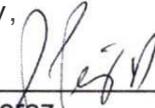
The Florida Department of Health will work closely with your school district if a case of measles is identified within the school population. The focus of this effort will be to limit any potential exposure within the school community. Parents of students without documentation of required immunizations should be aware that a case of measles in their child's school will require all children without documented proof of immunization or immunity to measles to be excluded immediately from attending school for a minimum of 21 days from the time of exposure or longer should additional cases occur. This authority granted in section §1003.22, Florida Statutes found at

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1003/Sections/1003.22.html.

If you have any questions about the information above, please contact your local county health department or visit www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html.

Thank you for your efforts to protect your child and other children in the community from measles.

Sincerely,



Jose H. Perez
Senior Physician