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Importance of vaccination highlighted as Michigan confirms first measles case of 2017

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human services has confirmed Michigan’s first measles case of 2017 in southeast Michigan. The individual was hospitalized, and is currently recovering. The case is related to exposure during international travel and underscores the importance of following all vaccine recommendations.

“Immunizations are the best way to protect our families and communities from the harmful, sometimes deadly consequences of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles,” said Dr. Eden Wells, Chief Medical Executive with the MDHHS. “If you have questions about a child’s vaccination status or your own vaccination history, talk to your doctor right away to ensure your family has optimal protection.”

Measles is a vaccine-preventable respiratory infection that can result in hospitalization, pneumonia, encephalitis, and death. The illness initially presents with a high fever, red eyes, cough, runny nose, photophobia, and is followed by a red, raised body rash starting on the head and face that then progresses to the rest of the body. Individuals may be contagious for a few days before they present with symptoms, which increases the potential of exposing others to the infection.

Because measles is highly communicable, vaccination is the best line of defense, and successful prevention and control requires high levels of immunity in all communities. MDHHS continues to coordinate with local health departments in southeast Michigan to monitor any potential secondary cases in individuals who may have been exposed to the initial case. Individuals known to have been potentially exposed while the patient was receiving treatment are being contacted for follow up.

Last year, Michigan confirmed one case of measles. From 2001 – 2012, the average number of measles cases reported nationally per year was about 60. But in recent years there have been more, which is of great concern to public health authorities. In 2014, there were 667 cases in the U.S. including five cases in Michigan; the majority of people who got measles were not vaccinated.

The measles vaccine is highly effective and very safe. Adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get at least one dose of the vaccine. The first of two routine childhood measles vaccine doses is given at 12 months of age. For international travel, infants as young as 6 months should be vaccinated against measles. The vaccination, or documentation of immunity to measles, is recommended for all persons travelling internationally.

In an effort to help parents protect their children from serious vaccine-preventable diseases, MDHHS recently joined the Fanny Strong Foundation to launch the I Vaccinate campaign. I Vaccinate provides the facts parents need to make informed decisions about vaccinations. For more information about immunizations and the I Vaccinate campaign, visit www.ivaccinate.org.

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