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Measles case identified in Michigan; health officials urge protection through vaccination

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has confirmed a case of measles in Washtenaw County; the first case in the state in 2018. The individual was hospitalized, and is currently recovering.

The individual returned from travel abroad March 6 at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, and was contagious upon returning to Michigan. Anyone who was in customs or baggage claim in the airport's north terminal between 2 and 5 p.m. that day should seek medical attention from their primary care provider if they develop symptoms of the disease.

Measles is a vaccine-preventable respiratory infection that can result in hospitalization, pneumonia, encephalitis and death. The illness has a 10 – 12 day incubation period and 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.

“This case underscores the importance of following vaccine recommendations and being up-to-date on vaccines,” said Dr. Eden Wells, MDHHS Chief Medical Executive. “Immunizations are the best way to protect our families and communities from the harmful, sometimes deadly consequences of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles. 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.”

Because measles is easily spread, vaccination is the best protection against the disease. Successful prevention and control of measles requires high levels of immunity in all communities.

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 2017, there were 118 cases in the U.S. including two cases in Michigan; the majority of people who got measles were not vaccinated.

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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. A second vaccine dose is given before the start of kindergarten.

For international travel, infants as young as 6 months should be vaccinated against measles. Measles vaccine, or other acceptable 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 is participating in 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 IVaccinate.org.

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