



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 11, 2010
PH10-017

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MEASLES CASES PROMPT CALL FOR IMMUNIZATIONS

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health, today reminded Californians of the importance of immunizations following reports of four individuals becoming ill with measles in a two-week period last month.

“Measles is a childhood disease that has been virtually eliminated in the United States because of immunization,” Horton said. “However, it could make a comeback in the U.S., as it did two decades ago, if immunization rates fall because some parents are reluctant to immunize their children.”

The recently reported measles cases involved an Amador County girl, a San Francisco County man, and a boy and a man in Santa Clara County. None of the four individuals had contact with one another. Of particular note, three of the four had recent travel outside North America, as do most of the measles cases reported in the U.S. Healthcare providers should remind patients who are traveling outside North America about the risk of measles and offer vaccine if appropriate. Healthcare providers should also consider patients have possibly contracted measles if they have fever, rash, and have a history of recent travel outside North America.

Measles causes fever, runny nose, cough and a rash all over the body. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about one out of 10 children with measles also develops an ear infection and up to one out of 20 develops pneumonia. For every 1,000 children who get measles, one or two will die.

In 2008, a measles outbreak in San Diego affected 12 infants and children under age nine. Measles can be prevented with the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. During the last large measles resurgence in the United States, from 1989-1991, there were 17,000 reported cases and 70 deaths in California.

“Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect your child and your community from measles,” Horton said.

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