

Measles Parent Information

February 20, 2012

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is to inform our school communities in the Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend that state health officials are reporting a total of 13 confirmed cases of measles in Central Indiana, involving both children and adults. All cases reside in Boone and Hamilton counties. The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) is working with local health departments and health care providers to identify additional cases of measles, and to prevent further transmission of the disease. If you have a fever and a rash, and attended Super Bowl events in Indianapolis on February 3rd, please stay at home, call your physician or health care provider, inform them of this information and seek treatment. I have clarified with Mr. Tom Duszynski, from the ISDH, that only **one reported case of measles constitutes outbreak status**. (This differs from the varicella disease which is outbreak status is considered five cases in an elementary school and three cases in a high school setting.) This is due to the fact that the measles vaccine, or the MMR, utilized in the United States is well established.

The state of Indiana requires that all students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade have 2 measles vaccines for school entry. Our schools also have parents who object to the measles immunization for their child/children. If you do object to the measles immunization for religious or medical reasons (these are the only two reasons that the State of Indiana recognizes), then please know that if there should be an outbreak in your child's school, your child must be excluded from school and all extracurricular activities for 21 days after the **last** known exposure. This rule is directed by the Indiana State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. The Diocese is bound by law to comply with the State standards since the Diocese of Fort Wayne – South Bend is an accredited school system.

Since the measles immunization has become a standard school immunization now, the measles rash/symptoms not as easily detectable to parents as it once was. Additional ISDH information about the measles disease:

Measles typically begins with a mild to moderate fever and is accompanied by a cough, runny nose, red eyes and a sore throat. Koplik spots (tiny red spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth), a characteristic sign of measles, may appear. A rash usually appears within three to five days and occurs first on the face - along the hairline and behind the ears. The rash may be slightly itchy, and rapidly spreads downward and outward to the chest and back and, finally, to the thighs and feet. Fever continues to increase and may reach as high as 104-105°F. The rash fades in about a week in the same order it appeared. Immuno-compromised patients may not exhibit a rash or may exhibit an atypical rash.

Measles is extremely contagious in unvaccinated populations. Patients with measles are contagious from the onset of symptoms until 4 days after rash onset. The incubation period from exposure until symptoms develop is typically 10-14 days, but may range from 7-21 days. The potential for this measles outbreak to spread across the state to other pockets of unvaccinated Hoosiers exists.

A rash illness in a patient with high fever should prompt immediate consideration of measles, especially in unvaccinated individuals or individuals with risk factors including recent overseas travel and unknown or incomplete vaccination status.

Here are additional questions/answers released by the ISDH that you may have:

Q: Why are people born before 1957 exempt from receiving MMR vaccine?

A: People born before 1957 lived through several years of epidemic measles before the first measles vaccine was licensed. As a result, these people are very likely to have had the measles disease. Surveys suggest that 95% to 98% of those born before 1957 are immune to measles.

Individuals born after 1957 should have one of the following:

- a medically documented history of measles disease
- documentation of 2 appropriately spaced measles-containing vaccine (eg. MMR, MMRV)
- IgG titer evidence of protective levels to rubeola (measles)

Q: Is there any way for an adult to find a record of their past immunizations on a website or other source if they do not have a written record in their possession?

A: Ideas for adults to find their records: check with parents, former schools, or doctors who may have your records, some health departments keep records of those they have immunized as well.

Q: What happens if preschoolers who have one MMR are in a setting that has a case of the measles? Will 4-6 year olds be given a second MMR?

A: One MMR is adequate coverage for preschoolers UNLESS there is exposure to a known measles case. In that event, ISDH would recommend the preschoolers get their second MMR early to be sure they are protected.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please consult with your child's health care practitioner. You may also contact Maureen VerVaet, RN, School Wellness Ministry, at 574-904-0233.

Sincerely,
Maureen VerVaet, RN

The School Wellness Ministry of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend Schools is sponsored through St. Joseph Regional Medical Center.