

January 30, 2019

Dear Staff Member:

A measles outbreak is occurring in the Vancouver, WA area and one identified case in King County Washington. At this time, we do not have any confirmed measles cases in Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens County. Northeast Tri County Health District (NETCHD) and your school district are preparing for the possibility that our local community could also see measles cases from this outbreak.

You are receiving this letter because you do not have evidence of immunity to measles on file with the school district. We are asking that you obtain proof of immunity* now to avoid potential exclusion from work if measles is identified in your school. Exclusion of exposed, non-immune individuals from public places (including work and school) during a measles outbreak is necessary to protect the health of not only the exposed individual, but also the entire community. Non-immune individuals are far more likely to become ill with measles after exposure than an immune individual, and measles can be spread before symptoms are apparent.

We understand that you may have decided to defer MMR vaccination because of personal, religious or medical reasons. We respect your beliefs and your right to make your health care choices based upon those beliefs. In an outbreak, we in public health, must protect our community from this very serious disease which can lead to hospitalization, lifelong complications or death.

We understand the hardship that exclusion from work puts on households. This information outlines what will happen if a contagious measles case is identified in your school, and the subsequent exclusion from school of non-immune individuals.

Exclusion from School

Because measles is an extremely contagious, airborne virus, exclusions will occur building-wide if a case is identified in a school. Exclusion notifications will come to families and staff in the form of an NETCHD Health Officer Order which you will receive from your school.

All exposed, non-immune staff will be asked to stay home from school, all school activities, and public places for 14 days, starting seven days after their first exposure and lasting through the 21st day after their last exposure. Exclusion will occur even if someone receives the first dose of MMR vaccine after the exposure because:

- The exposure to measles has already occurred,
- A non-immune individual can transmit measles before symptoms, and
- Immunity takes up to two weeks to develop after immunization.

Some individuals may be hesitant to get the MMR vaccine if they will still be excluded for 14 days; however, not getting the vaccine could lead to exclusion for the length of the outbreak in their school which can be much longer than 14 days. To avoid becoming sick with measles and to avoid exclusion if measles is identified in your school, NETCHD recommends vaccinating or obtaining other proof of immunity (such as a titer) now before an exposure occurs.

About Measles and the MMR Vaccine

Measles is a very contagious virus that is spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or shares food/drinks. Some can get measles by sharing the same airspace as someone infected with measles. Symptoms usually start with a fever, runny nose, red eyes and cough followed a few days later by a rash that starts on the head and spreads downward. Measles symptoms usually appear 10-14 days after exposure but can range from 7-21 days. If you think you or your child might have measles, call a healthcare provider immediately. To avoid potentially exposing others, do not go to a clinic or hospital without calling first.

The best protection against measles is to get immunized with the MMR vaccine. In almost all cases (97%), people who get MMR vaccine are protected against measles. The MMR vaccine has been in use for nearly 50 years in the United States, and reports of serious side effects after vaccination are extremely rare.

Please see the attached measles fact sheet for more information about measles and the MMR vaccine. If you have questions, please reach out to your school nurse or call Northeast Tri County Health District Offices:

Colville: 509-684-2262

Newport: 509-447-3131

Republic: 509-775-3111

*Acceptable evidence of immunity for measles for adults includes:

- Documentation from a healthcare provider or official immunization record of one dose of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine, with the dose given on or after the first birthday;
- Laboratory evidence of immunity (this is called a titer, or a measles [rubeola] IgG test, and can be ordered from your healthcare provider on a blood sample to prove immunity);
- Documentation of healthcare provider-diagnosed measles illness; or
- Birth before 1957.