



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONFIRMED MEASLES CASE IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PROMPTS RAPID PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

SANTA BARBARA, Ca - The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is investigating exposures to a confirmed measles patient. The one confirmed case in Santa Barbara County is linked to the measles outbreak in Los Angeles that currently involves 11 patients. Of the 12 measles cases now involved in the Los Angeles outbreak, only one has provided documentation of vaccination.

The exposures in Santa Barbara occurred at Goleta Valley Cottage Hospital on Tuesday, December 27th between 7:24 p.m. and 10:16 p.m. There were no other exposures. All exposed healthcare workers, patients, and visitors have already been contacted and appropriate measures are being taken to protect their health and the community. Cottage Health was able to quickly verify that all exposed healthcare workers were fully vaccinated against the measles virus.

Measles is a highly contagious virus spread through the air from person to person through coughing or sneezing. The virus spreads rapidly among people who are not immune. Symptoms include rash, cough, runny nose, and conjunctivitis. By the time an individual shows symptoms they have typically already been infectious for four days. This can result in many community exposures and requires rapid public health contact tracing. The incubation period for developing measles after an exposure is up to 21 days. Unvaccinated individuals who have been exposed to the virus and cannot or will not receive the MMR vaccine may be placed under quarantine to protect others. This is the standard public health protocol with air-borne communicable diseases.

Measles is a serious disease and can cause encephalitis, pneumonia, and even death. The outcomes are particularly serious for young children, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems. In the decade before 1963 when a vaccine became available, it is estimated three to four million people in the United States were infected annually. Each year an estimated 400 to 500 people died, 48,000 were hospitalized, and 4,000 suffered encephalitis (swelling of the brain) from measles.

Santa Barbara County Public Health is working closely with the public health departments in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties where additional exposures to this case have occurred. A critical piece of the investigation is documenting that exposed individuals have received two doses of the MMR vaccine. Community members who are unsure of their vaccination status should contact their healthcare provider to determine if they need to receive the vaccine.

For more information about measles, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/measles>. You can also call the Public Health Department information line at 681-4373 for basic information about measles.

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