



1020 Washington St. N, Twin Falls, Idaho
208-737-5900 www.phd5.idaho.gov

April 21, 2011

PRESS RELEASE-For Immediate Release

Contact: Mary Jensen, Epidemiology Manager, 737-5969

Vaccination is the Best Protection Against Measles

TWIN FALLS- Confirmation of measles in Utah has prompted South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) to advise people to verify that they and their children are current on measles vaccinations. Vaccination is the best protection against measles.

The measles, a highly contagious virus, causes rash, a cough, runny nose, eye irritation, and fever. Symptoms appear a week to three weeks after exposure. The virus can lead to ear infections, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death. Measles spreads easily through coughing and sneezing. It is contagious 3 to 5 days before and 4 days after a rash starts.

“The virus resides in the mucous found in the nose and throat of an infected person,” said Mary Jensen, SCPHD Epidemiology Manager. “The virus can remain active and contagious on infected surfaces for up to two hours. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not vaccinated will also become infected with the measles virus.”

The measles vaccine requires two doses for 99% effectiveness. Children take the first dose when they’re 12 to 15 months old. At least 28 days must separate the two doses, but children typically take the second dose between the ages of 4 and 6. Adults born after 1957 should get at least one dose of the measles vaccine unless they can show they’ve either had the vaccine or the disease. Pregnant women should wait until after giving birth to get the vaccine. People with life-threatening allergic reactions to gelatin, neomycin, or previous doses of the measles vaccine should not take the vaccine.

“People that plan on traveling should be aware that the current outbreaks of measles in the United States have been traced back to foreign countries,” Jensen said. “Anyone planning to travel abroad or even just within the United States should check their vaccination records and make sure they are up-to-date. Worldwide, there are estimated to be 10 million measles cases and 197,000 deaths each year.”

If vaccination records show a need for measles vaccine or you plan on traveling abroad, call your local health care provider or SCPHD (737-5900) for more information and/or an appointment.

###