Provider Health Alert

Press Release

Confirmed Measles Case in Santa Barbara
March 31st & April 1st, 2011

The California Public Health Laboratory confirmed a case of measles on April 6, 2011 in a 29 year old European tourist vacationing in California. The patient’s onset of illness was April 2nd and he was infectious from March 29th through April 6th. The tourist spent approximately 12 hours in Santa Barbara County, exclusively in the city of Santa Barbara, on only the days of March 31st and April 1st. He visited two restaurants and one motel where exposure of the public may have occurred.

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease usually prevented by universal vaccination in childhood. In vulnerable persons the symptoms of infection are a rash that is pink to red blotches (macules) that can merge into large areas of the skin, fever, cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis (red, swollen and watery eyes) and white spots in the mouth. It is usually a moderate to serious illness with intense discomfort, unlike a common cold.

A small number of the Santa Barbara public may have been exposed in the locations that the tourist visited but since he did not spend a substantial time at any of these and he was not yet ill, the risk of transmission is probably low. These locations are Holiday Lodge Motel at 2825 State Street, Shintori Sushi at 3001 State Street (probable) on the evening of March 31st and Our Daily Bread at 831 Santa Barbara Street in the morning of April 1st. If there was no exposure at these sites and times, then the risk of infection is extremely small.

Individuals born before 1957 have a 5% or less risk of being susceptible. Those born after and who have been immunized with two doses of the vaccine are also at low risk of susceptibility. Individuals with incomplete immunization (none or only one dose) are at higher risk to acquire the infection. Immunization is a highly effective means for prevention of measles and the public is encouraged to immunize their children.

The period during which any susceptible person in Santa Barbara would become ill is April 8th through April 29th. Any resident who develops an illness with a rash and other symptoms listed above is advised to contact his or her medical care provider promptly. It is better to call and ask about possible measles than to go to a doctor’s office or emergency room for evaluation. It is important to prevent transmission by isolating persons suspected of having the infection.

It is important to recall that this case is Rubeola measles and not Rubella measles. Rubella is a milder disease but is a serious threat to pregnant women and their unborn children. Both diseases are prevented by vaccination. Both diseases caused serious illness, severe complications and rarely death in the pre-vaccine era; these have been eliminated with the standard vaccination of children.

Measles is a reportable disease and any suspected cases must be reported to the Public Health Department by phone within 24 hours at 681-5280. Go to the link below or call 681-5435 for more information:

http://www.countyofsfb.org/phd/default_all.aspx?id=6140&menu2id=1112&pghead=18912&footer=18438

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