

Health and Human Services

May 8, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Measles outbreaks are currently occurring in the United States and in many other countries through the world. Although Wisconsin has not had a confirmed case of measles this year, all of the states surrounding Wisconsin, except Minnesota, have reported measles cases in 2019. The majority of people who get measles are unvaccinated.

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can be spread through coughing and sneezing. The virus can stay in the air for up to two hours after an infected person has been in a room. Measles is so contagious that nine out of ten people who are exposed to the virus and are not immune (those who haven't been vaccinated or haven't had the disease) will also become infected. Measles typically begins with a high fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. Tiny white spots may also appear inside the mouth. Then, a skin rash breaks out. Infected people can spread measles from four days before through four days after the rash appears.

Measles can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children. About one out of four people who get measles will be hospitalized. A serious, potential complication of measles is brain swelling (encephalitis), which may lead to permanent brain damage. Measles infection can even cause death.

Measles can be prevented with MMR vaccine. MMR vaccine is very safe and very effective. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective in preventing measles. It is recommended that children get two doses of MMR vaccine, the first dose at 12-15 months of age and the second dose at 4-6 years of age. Teens and adults should also be up-to-date with MMR vaccinations.

According to the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR), 84% of Calumet County residents ages 4-18 have received two doses of MMR. That means that nearly 1,700 school-age children in Calumet County may not be protected against measles. **Please make sure that your child has received the recommended doses of MMR vaccine.** You may check immunization records by logging on to the WIR at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/wir.htm>. You may also contact your health care provider or Calumet County Public Health to check on your child's immunization record.

If your child develops a rash with a fever, keep your child home from school and contact your health care provider for instructions. Measles can easily spread to and from unimmunized children. In addition to being at risk for getting sick, unless a timely dose of MMR or Immunoglobulin is given, a child who has been exposed measles and has not had two doses of MMR must be quarantined and may not attend school for up to 21 days after exposure.

The best way to protect your child against measles is to make sure that he or she has received the recommended doses of MMR. Please go to <https://cdc.gov/measles>, or contact Calumet County Public Health, for more information.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Kolbe

Bonnie Kolbe, RN, BSN

Health Officer/Health Division Manager

Calumet County Health and Human Services Department

920-849-1432



Public Health

Present. Prevent. Protect.

