

Panhandle

Public Health District

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For Immediate Release:

Measles Outbreak Highlights Need for Immunization and Awareness in Nebraska Panhandle

Panhandle Public Health District is responding to the recent increase in measles cases reported in Texas and New Mexico. The contagious nature of measles necessitates that every community remain informed and prepared. PPHD is actively monitoring the situation and urging all residents to review their immunization status and take proactive measures to protect themselves and their families.

What Is Measles?

Measles is a highly contagious viral illness that primarily affects the respiratory system. The disease is characterized by a range of symptoms that typically appear 7 to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

Initial symptoms include:

- **High Fever:** Often one of the first signs, with temperatures that can spike rapidly.
- **Cough:** A persistent, dry cough is common.
- **Runny Nose:** Nasal congestion and a runny nose frequently accompany other symptoms.
- **Red, Watery Eyes (Conjunctivitis):** The eyes may become sensitive to light and appear red.
- **Rash:** A red, blotchy rash usually develops on the face and then spreads downward to cover the rest of the body.

In some cases, small white spots known as Koplik spots may appear inside the mouth before the rash develops. Due to its contagious nature, measles can lead to serious complications, particularly in young children and individuals with weakened immune systems.

Recommended Vaccination Schedule

To ensure protection against measles, the following immunization schedule is recommended:

- **First Dose:** Administered at 12 to 15 months of age
- **Second Dose:** Administered at 4 to 6 years of age

For adolescents and adults without documented evidence of immunity, a catch-up vaccination is advised. Staying current with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine is the most effective way to prevent measles and its potentially serious complications.

Call your local vaccine provider or PPHD at 308-633-2866 for questions regarding immunizations. No insurance? Ask about the Vaccine for Children's (VFC) and Vaccine for Adult's (VFA) program.

Protecting Our Communities

“Preventing the spread of measles is a shared responsibility,” said Paulette Schnell, Deputy Director of Clinical Services at PPHD.

“By ensuring that all eligible individuals receive their MMR vaccinations according to the recommended schedule, we can help safeguard our communities while actively monitoring the situation,” she added.

Residents are encouraged to:

- **Verify Vaccination Status:** Review personal and family immunization records.
- **Seek Medical Advice:** Consult healthcare providers if exposure to measles is suspected or if symptoms such as high fever, cough, runny nose, and rash occur.
- **Stay Informed:** Follow updates from PPHD for any further notices or changes to public health recommendations.

Background on the Situation

Recent reports from Texas and New Mexico indicate a rise in confirmed measles cases, underscoring the need for continuous attention to vaccination efforts. Health officials are managing the situation carefully, and this notice serves as a reminder of the importance of staying current with immunizations.

PPHD remains committed to closely monitoring the situation and providing timely public health information to ensure the well-being of the communities we serve.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community. Visit our website www.pphd.ne.gov.