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January 27, 2015

Letter to Parents of Students

We are writing to update you on the measles situation in California and Contra Costa County. At this time there are no measles cases reported in Contra Costa County, but other counties in the Bay Area have reported cases. It is possible that there will be more measles cases. As of January 27, 73 people in California have been confirmed with measles since late December 2014.

We want to reassure parents that although measles is very contagious, it is highly preventable through vaccinations. If your children have been fully vaccinated, they are well protected from catching measles. However, California's measles outbreak serves as an important reminder that everyone needs to be vaccinated if they have not had the disease in the past.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and pediatricians recommend that children get two doses of the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. The first dose is given at 12 to 15 months of age and the second dose usually at 4 to 6 years of age. Two doses of MMR vaccine are more than 99 percent effective in preventing measles.

Not only is the MMR a doctor-recommended vaccine, it is also required for school. School immunization requirements make schools and our community safer and healthier. Unless they have an exemption, most children who attend public and private schools in California have received MMR vaccine.

However, in settings where large numbers of unvaccinated people gather, such as international tourist attractions or schools with high exemption levels, vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles can spread quickly and sicken many, including babies too young to be vaccinated and those who cannot be vaccinated because of a health condition.

Adults also need to be up to date on vaccinations. We recommend that everyone, including parents, teachers and volunteers, review their vaccination records.

People born before 1957 are considered immune as they likely had measles as children and developed immunity from the disease. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about your vaccination status.

For more information about measles and measles vaccine, please visit: www.cchealth.org/measles

Sincerely,

Erika Jenssen, MPH
Communicable Disease Programs Chief

