Measles Outbreak: What to do if your school gets hit with the Measles.

There have been up to 87 confirmed Measles cases in 7 states and Mexico since the outbreak started to spread in the state of California. 50 of these cases are directly linked to visitors of Disneyland in December 2014 and January 2015. The disease has since spread to Arizona, Utah, Washington State, Oregon, Colorado, Nebraska and Mexico. In California, patients range from 7 months to 70 years. 1 in 4 have been hospitalized according to the LA Times.

The California department of public health released the following statement on January 22, 2015:

“Measles is highly contagious and highly preventable through vaccinations. CDPH is urging caution to individuals who are not vaccinated, especially infants under 12 months. Any place where large numbers of people congregate and there are a number of international visitors, like airports, shopping malls and tourist attractions, you may be more likely to find measles, which should be considered if you are not vaccinated. It is safe to visit these places, including the Disneyland Resort, if you are vaccinated. Therefore, CDPH recommends that anyone not already immunized against measles gets immunized at this time. Two doses of measles-containing vaccine (MMR vaccine) are more than 99 percent effective in preventing measles. If you are unsure of your vaccination status, check with your doctor to have a test to check for measles immunity or to receive vaccination.”

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease. It is widespread in many parts of the world, including Europe, Africa, and Asia. Measles begins with a fever that lasts for a couple of days, followed by a cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis (pink eye), and a rash. The rash typically appears first on the face, along the hairline, and behind the ears and then affects the rest of the body. Infected people are usually contagious from about 4 days before their rash starts to 4 days afterwards. Children routinely get their first dose of the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine at 12 months old or later. The second dose of MMR is usually administered before the child begins kindergarten but may be given one month or more after the first dose.

Students (including college students), health care workers, and unvaccinated Californians who are traveling outside of North or South America should receive MMR vaccine before they go. Infants who are traveling can be vaccinated as young as six months of age (though they should also have the two standard doses of MMR vaccine after their first birthday). Individuals getting ready to travel abroad can find helpful information about travel vaccines in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

For routine measles surveillance data, please see the Vaccine Preventable Disease Annual Report.

It is important for parents and schools to be aware of their student's current immunization compliance. Schools with low immunization compliance and high immunization exceptions are at a higher risk to be infected. Now is a good time to make sure your students are immunized to avoid being infected with the Measles.
What are the first steps to prep if this hits your school?
You will want to make sure you have a list of all of the students that are exempt from the Measles vaccine. These students should be not allowed to attend school during this outbreak.

Having an electronic student health record program is helpful during a time like this, making it easy to run a quick list of all students that are exempt, or are not compliant.

The infected students should not attend school for at least 21 days and should be under the care of their primary doctor. The county’s health department will likely dictate whether this absence from school will be excused under a medical leave.

Below you will find a few reports of the measles found in schools, and some resources to help you prepare your school.

- 1/25/15: Santa Monica’s freshmen baseball coach had been diagnosed with the Measles. Luckily, all students on the baseball team were vaccinated and there haven’t been any further cases at the school.
- 1/23/2015: Twenty students out of 3,000 students at the Huntington Beach High School have been asked to stay home from school since early January since they were not vaccinated.
- Early January: 1 Student at the Orange County high school has been diagnosed with the measles.
- 1/26/15: a student in South Dakota has been diagnosed with measles

Here are a few photos of the measles from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more photos, visit the CDPH website:
www.cdph.ca.gov

The Ohio Department of Health had created a Measles letter to all school nurses explaining what to do during a Measles outbreak.

KEY ACTION POINT: What school nurses should do now
School nurses should review the immunization records of the children and identify those who are not up-to-date with their measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. It is recommended that parents be contacted and advised to vaccinate their children if there is not a medical contraindication. The parents should be informed that if their child is not vaccinated and a case of measles occurs in the school, their child will be excluded until 21 days after rash onset in the last case of measles.

Click Here to access the full letter: