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Measles Vaccination Can Protect You from Outbreak

Tooele, UT-The Tooele County Health Department urges Tooele County residents to ensure they are protected against the measles virus. With measles cases occurring in multiple states, it is more important than ever to take action now in case a measles outbreak reaches Utah and our own community.

Measles is a highly contagious virus. People who are not immune have a 90% chance of getting measles if they are exposed to the virus. People are infectious for up to two days before the onset of symptoms. Measles symptoms typically appear 7 to 14 days after exposure and may include fever, cough, runny nose, and red or watery eyes. Small white spots may develop inside the mouth. A prominent rash is the most visible symptom, typically beginning on the forehead and face before spreading down the body. While many cases are mild, about 1 in 5 unvaccinated individuals with measles require hospitalization. Some cases may even lead to death due to complications related to the disease. Young children, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe complications.

The most effective way to protect yourself and your family from this highly contagious virus is to get vaccinated against measles. The measles vaccine is safe and effective. The measles vaccine is combined with vaccines for mumps and rubella. This is known as the MMR vaccine. To prevent a measles outbreak in a community, 95% of people need to be immune to it either through vaccination or through having had the disease at some point in their lives.

"This is a time to talk with your healthcare provider about you and your loved ones being up to date on your immunizations," says Dr. Grant Sunada, Executive Director of the Tooele County Health Department. "The measles vaccine has been known to be safe and effective for decades. With measles being so easy to spread and cause illness among those who are not vaccinated, we can take this step to protect those around us, especially those who are not able to be vaccinated and are most vulnerable."

It is recommended that children get two doses of the MMR vaccine, with the first dose between 12 and 15 months of age and the second dose between age 4 and 6 years of age. Teens and adults should also be up to date on the vaccine. For adults, recommendations differ depending on age and vaccination history.

- Adults born before 1957 generally do not need to be vaccinated. They are likely already immune to measles due to widespread infection before the measles vaccine became available in 1963.
- Adults who were vaccinated between 1963 and 1967 should have a second dose because the vaccine used during that time was less effective than the current vaccine.
- Adults who were vaccinated in 1968 or later should follow up with their health care provider to make sure they are fully protected.

Contact your health care provider or check your immunization record to find out if you or your child need a dose of the measles vaccine. The measles vaccine is available at many pharmacies, doctor's offices, and at the Tooele County Health Department.

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