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Date: Tuesday, July 10, 2012

Winnebago County Health Department Reports a Probable Case of Measles

The Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) is investigating a probable case of measles. At present we have a four year old with a rash that began near the ears with an onset of 6/30/2012. The child also presented with conjunctivitis, fever, and Koplik spots as observed by a physician. The last confirmed case of measles in Winnebago County was prior to 1994.

Measles is a highly contagious disease. Measles is transmitted from person to person via respiratory droplets. Measles spreads through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes. The time from exposure to the onset of rash averages 14 days.

The illness is characterized by a fever and cold like symptoms that may include a runny nose; red runny and sensitive eyes; and a cough. These symptoms are followed by a red blotchy rash that usually start on the face or neck and spreads to the rest of the body.

WCHD strongly urges all area health-care professionals to maintain a high index of suspicion for the appearance of additional measles cases in the coming weeks and report all suspect cases to WCHD. Measles is an extremely serious and highly contagious viral disease that is spread through airborne droplets person to person.

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Furthermore, as outbreaks of measles continue abroad, the importation of measles cases in travelers continues to be an issue. Physicians should consider measles in persons with clinically compatible illness and a recent travel history. Thanks to widespread measles vaccinations, measles is extremely rare in the United States. However, the disease is still brought into our country by people who get infected abroad. In 2011, 222 people in the United States were reported to have measles. U.S. residents and visitors got measles abroad and brought it to United States and spread it to others. This caused 17 measles outbreaks in various U.S. communities last year.

The Measles vaccine is highly effective in preventing disease. Who should get the measles vaccine? It is recommended that people of all ages keep up to date with all of their vaccinations, and it specifically recommend the children receive two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella, or MMR vaccine. The first dose administered at ages 12 through 15 months and the second dose at 4 to 6 years of age.

Winnebago County residents who are uninsured or do not have a medical provider can receive vaccinations at the Winnebago County Health Department. Vaccination appointments can be made by calling 815-720-4370.

WCHD has taken steps to respond to this case including:

- Enhancing surveillance for measles in Winnebago County;
- Issuing a Health Alert to private healthcare providers;
- Providing vaccinations to underinsured or uninsured populations;

Additional information on measles can be accessed at the WCHD website at www.wchd.org; or by calling the Winnebago County Health Department at 815-720-4000 during normal business hours.

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