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Measles in Grand Traverse County

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The Grand Traverse County Health Department is reporting 2 confirmed cases of Measles in Grand Traverse County. The two cases were both unimmunized and had recently returned from traveling to the Philippines. According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, these are the first measles cases in Michigan in 2014. Over 600 measles cases have been reported nationwide in 2014, the highest number in any year since 1994. The Philippines has been experiencing a major measles outbreak since November 2013; the country reports more than 50,000 cases and more than 100 deaths in 2014.

According to Dr. Michael Collins, Medical Director, “Measles is a highly contagious infection caused by a virus that is spread through the air. It can be quite serious, especially for young children under 5 and for adults, especially those with other chronic illnesses.”

The Health Department is working with several entities to directly contact those who may have been exposed. Several close contacts have been isolated and are being monitored for symptoms. The Health Department is also encouraging the public to make sure they are vaccinated against the measles, as world-wide there has been a resurgence of cases.

“The best way to protect yourself from the measles is to get vaccinated with the MMR (measles/mumps/rubella) vaccine, which is very effective and safe” said Wendy Trute, Health Officer for Grand Traverse County Health Department. “Adults and children all need to be vaccinated to protect the health their families, friends and the community as a whole.” Immunity to measles is life-long, either through having the measles or being immunized. People born before 1957 can be assumed to be immune, as nearly every child caught measles prior to the availability of a vaccine. Individuals who had the measles shot (MMR) in childhood, are also immune.

Symptoms of measles include fever, runny nose, cough, loss of appetite, “pink eye,” and a rash. The rash usually lasts 5-6 days and begins at the hairline, moves to the face and upper neck, and proceeds down the body. A number of complications, especially diarrhea, are possible and measles can result in hospitalization, pneumonia, encephalitis and death. Individuals who develop measles begin to be infectious to others several days before they themselves become sick.

More information on Measles can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>

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