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Measles Information Update

Dear Parents:

The measles outbreak continues in the United States, affecting 14 states and approximately 150 cases are now confirmed. Measles has been confirmed in the states surrounding Iowa, including Minnesota, Illinois, Nebraska, and South Dakota. As of today, February 13, 2015, there are NO cases of measles in the state of Iowa.

During times like this, when we know a virus is circulating in many states, it's especially critical to check with your health care provider to be sure you and your family's vaccinations are current. The best way to prevent measles is to get the measles-mumps-rubella shot (called MMR). Two doses of MMR will provide more than 99 percent of people lifelong protection against measles.

Two doses of MMR are required for elementary and secondary school entry in Iowa. The first dose should be given at 12 months of age and the second dose can be administered as soon as 28 days later (however the second dose is usually administered as part of the kindergarten shots given between 4-6 years of age). Generally, persons who started elementary school in Iowa after 1991 were up-to-date on all school entry vaccine requirements and have received two doses of MMR vaccine.

Giving vaccines to those who may have already had measles or may have already received the recommended vaccination is not harmful; it only boosts immunity. Therefore, if someone is unable to verify prior vaccination or history of illness, the easiest, quickest and most appropriate thing to do is to vaccinate the individual.

Although transmission of measles is rare in immunized children, we do want to alert you to the signs and symptoms of measles. Measles is very contagious. It is spread through the air and can linger in the air for up to two hours in the place where the infectious person has been. Measles starts with a high fever. Soon after, it causes a cough, runny nose, and red eyes. Three to seven days after the fever, a rash of tiny, red spots breaks out. It usually starts at the head and spreads to the rest of the body. The rash can last for a week, and coughing can last for 10 days.

If a resident of Washington County would have measles, all residents would be notified of places, times and locations where they could have been exposed, as well as locations of emergency vaccination clinics.

If your child comes down with symptoms described above, please **call** your child's healthcare provider or healthcare facility, prior to arriving for the appointment. If you have additional questions, contact your healthcare provider or Washington County Public Health at 319-653-7758 or toll free at 800-655-7758.

Sincerely,

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Public Health Nurse

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Washington HS & MS nurse