

Friday, 5 October 2012

HEALTH ALERT – APPEAL FOR VACCINATION AGAINST MEASLES

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District is appealing to the community to check or arrange to be properly immunised against measles, following a recent outbreak of measles in NSW.

Public health experts are concerned about the largest measles epidemic in 14 years. A total of 145 cases have been reported this year across NSW with 54 of these diagnosed in the last month.

There has been a spike of measles cases in NSW since the beginning of June, initially in Western Sydney, South Western Sydney and now in the Illawarra district.

Director of Public Health Unit, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Professor Mark Ferson said measles is a potentially serious infection which can be prevented by vaccination.

“Measles is highly contagious and can be spread simply by being in the same room with someone carrying the disease,” Professor Ferson said.

The time from exposure of measles to the onset of symptoms is usually around 10 days but can be as long as 18 days.

“People with measles usually feel extremely unwell. Symptoms can include a high fever, tiredness, runny nose, cough and sore eyes before a blotchy red rash appears; with a quarter to a third of people with measles requiring hospitalisation for measles.

“Anyone with symptoms of measles should not to go school, work or go out in public. Anyone who thinks they might be infected should see a doctor, but call ahead to make sure they do not infect others at the doctor’s surgery,” Professor Ferson said.

The measles vaccine is free from your GP. Anyone born in Australia before 1966 is likely to be immune and not need vaccination.

“People need two doses of Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine for the best protection against measles.

“It is safe to have the MMR vaccine more than twice. People – except pregnant women - who are unsure of their immunity should get vaccinated regardless.

“Women who are pregnant should not have the MMR vaccine and should seek immediate medical advice from their GP or local hospital if they develop symptoms or have any queries or concerns,” Professor Ferson said.

Further information on measles please call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222 or visit the NSW Health website at <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au>.

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