

02 April 2019

MEASLES ALERT TWO CASES IN INFANTS

NSW Health is again advising people to be alert for signs and symptoms of measles following the diagnosis of two infants too young to be vaccinated, who probably acquired the infection from recent cases in Sydney.

An 8 month old infant, likely caught the infection in the Haymarket area near World Square. The infant spent time at the following locations while infectious:

- Yass Korean BBQ Buffet, 1/39 The Boulevard, Strathfield on Tuesday 26 March, between 6:30pm and 10:00pm;
- Time Brasserie (restaurant/café), Shop 11, Level 1 Time Plaza Hurstville 127-137 Forest Rd Hurstville on Wednesday 27 March between 4:00pm and 5:30pm; and
- St George Hospital Emergency Department, 28a Gray St Kogarah on Saturday 30 March between 7:30pm and 11:00pm.

An 11 month old infant, likely caught the infection in the Eastwood area. The infant spent time at the following locations while infectious:

- Eastwood Plaza 152-160 Rowe St Eastwood, including play areas near Woolworths and on the first floor on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 of March;
- Castle Towers, 6-14 Castle St Castle Hill, including play area on the Lower Ground floor on Tuesday 26 and Friday 29 March;
- The North Village 10-12 Hezlett Rd Kellyville on Wednesday 27, Friday 29 and Saturday 30 March; and
- North Village Family Practice, Shop S3 the North Village Kellyville, on Wednesday 27 at 12-1.15pm, Friday 29 5.30-6.30pm and Saturday 30 March 9 to 12pm.

NSW Health Director of Communicable Diseases, Dr Vicky Sheppard, explained that while the above places do not pose an ongoing risk, people who may be susceptible to measles and were present at the above locations at the identified times should contact their local public health unit for advice on 1300 066 055.

“The local public health units are working directly with medical practices and hospitals to follow up other patients present at the same time as the infants, and offer preventive treatment as appropriate,” Dr Sheppard said.

People who have spent time in the same locations at the same times as these infants should be alert for signs and symptoms of measles until 18 April 2019, as it can take up to 18 days for symptoms to appear following exposure to a person with measles.

Symptoms include fever, sore eyes and a cough followed three or four days later by a red, blotchy rash spreading from the head and neck to the rest of the body.

“If you develop symptoms, please call ahead to your GP to ensure you do not wait in the waiting room with other patients,” Dr Sheppeard said.

Cases of measles in infants such as these highlight the importance of ensuring that all people able to be vaccinated have received two doses of measles vaccine.

Maintaining high rates of measles immunisation within the community reduces the risk of measles being imported into Australia by returned travellers and, through herd immunity, reduces the spread of the virus locally if it is introduced.

“Herd immunity provides protection to those unable to be vaccinated such as infants and people with weakened immune systems,” Dr Sheppeard said.

“The measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is safe and effective protection against measles. It’s free for anyone born during or after 1966 who hasn’t already had two doses. If you’re unsure whether you’ve had two doses, it’s safe to have another.”

Measles is highly contagious and is spread in the air through coughing or sneezing by someone who is unwell with the disease. For more information on measles visit: health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/measles/Pages/default.aspx