

5 April 2019

WOMAN WITH MEASLES SPARKS FRESH ALERT

Shoppers and school students in Sydney's north are being urged to be alert for symptoms of measles after a woman in her 40s became the latest person in NSW to be diagnosed with the disease.

Confirmation of the latest case takes the total number of people infectious with the highly-contagious disease in NSW since Christmas to 31.

Health experts believe the woman was infected in mid-March while visiting the Eastwood shopping precinct, in Sydney's north-west.

The woman spent time in the following locations while infectious:

28 March

- North Sydney Boys High School's uniform shop, corner Falcon and Miller streets, Crows Nest, between 8:30am and 9:30am
- Eastwood Shopping Centre, 23/160 Rowe St, Eastwood

2 April

- MyHealth Medical Centre, Eastwood Shopping Centre, 23/160 Rowe St, Eastwood, between 2:30pm and 5:00pm
- DHM Collection Centre, 170 Rowe St, Eastwood, between 3pm and 3:45pm

4 April

- DHM Collection Centre, 170 Rowe St, Eastwood, between 1:20pm and 2:05pm

Local Public Health Units are working with the medical and collection centres and school to contact people who may have been there at the same time as the woman.

NSW Health Acting Director of Communicable Diseases, Dr Sean Tobin, said none of the locations visited by the woman pose an ongoing risk.

However he urged people who may be susceptible to measles and were at the same locations at the same time as the woman to contact their local public health unit for advice on 1300 066 055.

"They should also be alert for signs of measles until 22 April 2019, as it can take up to 18 days for symptoms to appear following exposure," Dr Tobin said.

"Measles virus can stay in the air for short periods of time (15 to 30 minutes), so if people enter a room after an infected person, they could still become infected.

“Anyone who develops symptoms of measles should phone their GP first to ensure they don’t wait alongside other patients before seeing their doctor.”

Symptoms to watch out for include fever, sore eyes and a cough followed three or four days later by a red, blotchy rash that spreads from the head to the body.

Dr Tobin said preventive injections can be given to highly-susceptible people up to six days after exposure to measles.

“The measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is safe and effective protection against measles,” he said.

“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.

While the risk of infection is low in fully-vaccinated people, health experts urge anyone in contact with someone who has measles to be alert for symptoms. They should limit their exposure to others and seek medical care if symptoms develop.

Protecting children from potentially deadly diseases is a key priority for the NSW Government, which has invested approximately \$130 million in the 2018-19 Immunisation Program budget, including Commonwealth and state vaccines.

The latest Annual Immunisation Coverage Report shows vaccination rates in NSW are at their highest level ever, with more than 95 per cent of five year olds vaccinated against measles.

For more information on measles visit:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/measles/Pages/key-facts.aspx>