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## **TRAVELLERS HEADING OVERSEAS URGED TO GET MEASLES JAB**

NSW Health is encouraging anyone travelling overseas to ensure they are vaccinated against measles as part of a new campaign launched today.

There have been 36 people diagnosed with the disease in NSW since December 2018, the majority of whom have been travellers who have entered or re-entered Australia and unknowingly been infected with measles.

The campaign targets overseas visitors, Australian travellers heading overseas and international university students who may go home for the holidays.

It has also been translated into four languages, specifically chosen to target the multicultural population who may travel to their country of origin and not consider themselves at risk because they are visiting family and friends in a familiar location.

NSW Health Director of Communicable Diseases, Dr Vicky Sheppard explained the importance of the campaign to all travellers.

“Measles by its very nature is an extremely contagious, potentially deadly disease,” Dr Sheppard said.

“As a consequence, many overseas travellers may be exposed to the disease despite not travelling to a country where it is currently endemic simply by coming into contact with a fellow traveller in the airport or on a transit flight.

“Measles virus can stay in the air for short periods of time, so if people enter a room shortly after an infected person has left, they could still become infected.”

The campaign is also focusing on childcare centres around the state and NSW public schools.

Anyone born during or after 1966 who hasn't already had two doses of the vaccine or had measles is eligible for the free vaccine.

“If you're not sure if you have had two doses, which provides lifelong protection in 99 out of 100 people, it is safe to get another jab, particularly if you're heading overseas,” Dr Sheppard said.

“Anyone with an infant younger than 12 months should see their GP prior to travel, as the child may be a candidate for early vaccination from six months of age.”

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

Anyone who develops any of these symptoms after returning home, should call ahead to inform their GP so arrangements can be made to limit their contact with other people in the surgery.

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 for travellers visit:

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/measles/Pages/default.aspx>