

29 December 18

NSW Health warns of measles risk

NSW Health is asking people to watch for measles symptoms after a young adult, recently returned from Thailand, was diagnosed with the infection.

The man was unknowingly susceptible to measles and developed symptoms around a week after returning to Sydney. He has now recovered and is no longer infectious.

The man was in the following locations while infectious:

- Governor Phillip Tower, Sydney, in the morning on Thursday 20 December
- Totti's, 283 Bondi Road, Bondi, in the afternoon on Thursday 20 December
- The Workout Club, 171 William Street, Darlinghurst, 8 – 9 am Friday 21 December
- Australian Golf Club, Roseberry, 11:30am – 4:30pm, Friday 21 December
- Holy Duck, Kensington Street, Chippendale, dinner Saturday 22 December
- David Jones, Elizabeth Street and Kidstuff, Pitt Street, Sydney, mid-afternoon Sunday 23 December
- St Vincent's Emergency Department in the evening Monday 24 until Christmas morning and again in the afternoon and evening on Thursday 27 December

Dr Vicky Sheppeard, Director Communicable Diseases NSW Health, said anyone who was in these locations at the same time should watch for symptoms.

"The time from exposure to the disease to the onset of symptoms is typically about 10 days but can be as long as 18 days so people should be alert to symptoms until January 14," Dr Sheppeard said.

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.

Dr Sheppeard said infants under 12 months of age who are too young to be vaccinated and young adults are most likely to be susceptible to measles.

"People in the 20-40 year age bracket may have missed out on the full vaccination program for measles and mistakenly believe they are protected against the disease.

"The measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe and highly effective protection against measles, and I urge anyone travelling to South East Asia to see their GP for a free shot if they are not fully protected.

"If you are unsure whether you have had two doses, it is quite safe to have another dose before you travel."

Protecting children from potentially deadly diseases is a key priority for the NSW Government, which has invested approximately \$120 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 94 per cent of five year olds vaccinated against measles.

NSW children at one and five years of age have some of the highest measles vaccine uptake in Australia, boosted by programs including the:

- Save the Date app campaign (\$5.5 million invested since 2013)
- Aboriginal Immunisation Health Worker program (\$1.3 million annually)
- New NSW Government laws that came in on 1 January preventing parents who object to vaccination from enrolling their children in preschools and early childhood centres.

Measles is highly contagious and is spread in the air through coughing or sneezing by someone who is unwell with the disease.

Dr Sheppard said it was important for people to see the GP if they have symptoms, and limit exposure to others until the GP has made a diagnosis.

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

“Medical and public health staff are contacting people known to have been in contact with this latest case to offer preventive injections, where appropriate.

“Vaccination is your best protection against this extremely contagious disease.”

For more information on measles, visit:

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Measles_Factsheet.aspx