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**CCPH Provides Update to Public Regarding Measles**

**Chaffee County, CO-** To address an emerging trend of inquiries related to the recent and ongoing measles outbreak in neighboring states to Colorado, Chaffee County Public Health (CCPH) would like to provide the following information so that the public has situational awareness and can be proactive in protecting itself from measles, especially as Spring Break travel is on the horizon for many households in the county.

**Situation overview:**

Since late January, the Texas Department of State Health Services has been responding to an ongoing outbreak of measles in the South Plains region of west Texas. As of March 4, 159 cases have been identified, many from a close-knit religious community with low vaccination coverage. Nine counties in Texas have reported cases, with a majority in Gaines County, which is a rural county with a population of about 21,000 people. Cases have also recently been reported in Dallam County, Texas, which is below the Oklahoma panhandle and within driving distance to southeastern Colorado. Five of the cases in Texas were vaccinated with at least one dose of MMR (Measles Mumps Rubella). The rest are unvaccinated, or their vaccination status is unknown. Twenty of the patients have been hospitalized, and there has been one death in an unvaccinated school-aged child. In addition, nine measles cases have been reported in Lea County, New Mexico, which borders Gaines County, Texas. Officials are investigating whether the nine confirmed New Mexico cases are linked to the Texas cases, or if widespread community transmission is occurring. In addition to Texas and New Mexico, measles cases have been reported in Alaska, California, Georgia, New Jersey, New York City, and Rhode Island in 2025. These numbers represent a significant increase compared to previous years.

**Measles:** Measles is a disease caused by a highly contagious virus. On average, a person infected with measles will infect 12-18 other people. In comparison, a person infected with influenza infects 1-2 people and a person infected with COVID infects 2-4 other people. The measles virus can affect anyone, but it is most common in children and can be especially dangerous to babies and young children, older adults without immunity or anyone who is immunocompromised. Measles infects the respiratory tract and then spreads through the body. Symptoms begin with a high fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes. Symptoms progress to white spots in the mouth and a full body rash. Around 1 in 5 unvaccinated people with measles will require hospitalization due to pneumonia, severe inflammation of the respiratory tract or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

**Testing:**   CCPH has updated Chaffee County healthcare providers with the latest recommendations and protocols regarding testing for measles.

**Immunization information**:

The best way to protect against measles is by making sure everyone is up to date on their MMR vaccine or has evidence of immunity. This is especially important for those who plan to travel to places with ongoing measles outbreaks or to countries where measles is endemic. The MMR vaccine is the best protection against measles (as well as mumps and rubella). Two doses of MMR vaccine provide approximately 97% protection against measles infection.

While CCPH has a supply of MMR, so do other immunization providers throughout the county. As of 3/3, Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center’s Outpatient Pharmacy does have MMR in its inventory. Safeway has reported that it usually offers MMR but none is available due to the vaccine now being on backorder. Walmart and City Market pharmacies have indicated that they would have to order MMR in order to offer it, and neither Buena Vista Drug nor Salida Pharmacy and Fountain provide it. At this time, CCPH recommends following the routine vaccine recommendations listed below.

**Routine vaccination recommendations**:

**Children**

* Two doses of measles containing-vaccine, with the first dose at 12-15 months of age, and the second dose at 4-6 years.
  + Children can receive a second dose of MMR vaccine earlier than 4-6 years, as long as it has been at least 28 days after the first dose if they are at an increased risk of infection, such as those travelling internationally to an area where measles is endemic or those who are part of an active outbreak.

**Infants**

* Infants traveling internationally to an area where measles is endemic should receive one dose of MMR vaccine at 6-11 months of age. Infants who get one dose of MMR vaccine before their first birthday should get two more doses according to the routinely recommended schedule.

**Adults**

* Adults should also be current on MMR vaccinations with either 1 or 2 doses (depending on risk factors) unless they have other presumptive evidence of immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella.

**Presumptive evidence of immunity can be established in any of the following ways**:

* Written documentation of **one or more doses** of a measles-containing vaccine administered on or after the first birthday for preschool-age children and adults not considered high risk.
* Written documentation of **two doses** of measles-containing vaccine for school-age children and adults at high risk, including students at post-high school secondary educational institutions, all health care personnel, and international travelers.
* Laboratory evidence of immunity.
* Laboratory confirmation of disease.
* Birth before 1957.

“As we near the five-year anniversary of our first case of COVID in Chaffee County, the recent outbreaks of measles in our neighboring states are a sobering reminder that serious illness and death from these diseases can be prevented. It’s important that our county understands the risk of disease transmission especially related to measles and is aware of the resources that are available at this time,” said Andrea Carlstrom, Director, Chaffee County Public Health, “If members of the public have questions about risk and recommendations regarding measles, they can reach out to their healthcare provider or a CCPH nurse at 719-539-4510.”

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