

Date: 8 January 2019

Infectious measles case in Hunter region and northern NSW

NSW Health is asking people in northern NSW to be on the lookout for measles symptoms after a teenager, who was incompletely vaccinated and had recently returned from Myanmar, developed the infection.

The teenager became infectious on 3 January while in Brisbane and travelled by car down to Newcastle on 5 January and visited the following NSW locations:

- Woodburn riverside precinct on 5 January
- John Hunter Hospital Emergency Department waiting room on 6 January, in the afternoon/evening

Dr David Durrheim, a public health physician with Hunter New England Health, said anyone who was in these locations at the same time should be alert 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 3 weeks so people should be alert to symptoms until the end of January," Dr Durrheim 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 Durrheim said infants under 12 months of age who are too young to be vaccinated and young adults who have not had two doses of measles vaccine 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.

"I urge travellers returning from Asia, Africa or Europe to be aware of the risk of measles, and isolate themselves from others if they develop a fever. Please call ahead to your GP so that you do not wait in the waiting room with other patients," Dr Durrheim said.

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

"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. 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 \$130 million in the 2018-19 Immunisation Program budget, including Commonwealth and state vaccines.

For more information on measles, visit

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