

Dear Parent / Guardian:

As you may have heard, California is currently experiencing a measles outbreak. Measles infection is caused by a virus, which spreads very easily through the air. Simply being in the same room with someone who has measles is enough for a vulnerable person to become infected. Although there are no cases of measles in Sonoma County right now, because it is so contagious, we should all take steps to prevent and prepare for measles.

Measles infection is caused by a virus. It starts with fever, cough, runny nose, and watery eyes. Then a rash develops which lasts about a week. For some individuals, measles can be very serious – it may cause pneumonia or encephalitis, a serious brain infection. In the U.S. people can still die from measles; this happens in about 1 to 2 people per 1,000. Measles illness during pregnancy can cause early labor, miscarriage, and low birth weight infants. If you or your child have a fever and a rash contact your health care provider as soon as possible. Call ahead to let them know your symptoms. If you visit your health care provider, immediately tell staff about the symptoms so steps can be taken to limit the spread of germs.

The best way to prevent measles is to get vaccinated. Sonoma County Public Health is urging parents to check your child's vaccination records and make sure your child has received the recommended two doses of MMR (measles mumps and rubella) vaccine. Children should receive their first dose of MMR at 12-15 months of age and their second dose at age 4-6 years.

If your child has not received the recommended doses of MMR, contact your health care provider as soon as possible to arrange for catch-up vaccinations. If you do not have a provider, a list of community clinics can be found at: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/immunizations>.

If you choose not to immunize, you should continue to discuss with your health care provider the risks of vaccine preventable diseases and the benefits and risks of vaccines. You should also understand that your decisions can affect many people and there are important responsibilities you have to help keep your community healthy. For more information see this document from the Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/downloads/not-vacc-risks-color-office.pdf>).

If you, or other adults in your house, have not been vaccinated with MMR and have not had measles, please talk to your health care provider, especially if you are a health care worker, attend college or trade school or work with babies, children, pregnant women or people with weak immune systems.

Should there be a case of measles in Sonoma County, Public Health will take steps to limit the spread of disease. This may include asking or requiring people to stay home from work or school.

If you have further questions about immunizations you can visit these webpages: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/immunizations>
<http://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>