



## Kingman County Health Department

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For more information, contact the Health Department, 620-532-2221

### **Measles best prevented by vaccination**

Over the past few weeks, measles has been a hot news item nationwide. Now, reports of this dangerous illness are hitting very close to home. As of July 18, 11 measles cases have been reported to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), eight of those cases in Sedgwick County.

Fortunately, Kingman County public health authorities have not yet received any confirmed measles reports. Nonetheless, with most of the illnesses being reported in a neighboring county many of us visit often, measles has become a significant public health concern. Measles is a scary disease, but fear can be combatted with knowledge and prevention.

Measles, a disease once thought to be eliminated from the United States, is a very contagious infection. In fact it's so infectious that for every person ill with measles, 9 out of 10 people around them who are not immune to measles will most likely get sick from it (from KDHE resources). When people first get measles, symptoms often resemble other less-serious illnesses. Examples include a runny nose, cough, fever and red eyes.

Even though people sick with measles usually don't have a rash right away, they are still very infectious, being able to spread the disease at least four days before the rash appears. The rash often starts with small, white spots bearing bluish centers, usually noted in the mouth. Next, a blotchy rash appears, typically spreading downward from the head to the trunk, and then the lower extremities; the fever can reach as high as 104 degrees. One out of three measles sufferers can also develop complications including pneumonia, encephalitis (brain swelling), ear infections, diarrhea, and, in most serious cases, death. In addition to those people who are not vaccinated for measles, KDHE states that infants, children under 5, adults over 20 years old, pregnant women and those who have problems fighting infection are especially at risk for contracting measles.

The best prevention for measles is vaccination. People who have received two doses of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine are considered adequately protected against measles. MMR vaccine is routinely given to toddlers 12-15 months of age and to children aged 4-6 years prior to school entry. Two doses of MMR vaccine have been required by law for public school entry in Kansas for several years. The MMR vaccine is the most safe and effective way to prevent measles. Public health officials are finding the vast majority of the measles cases are in those who are not vaccinated.

Kingman County Health Department does have MMR vaccine available to anyone who needs it. People who are not sure of their vaccination history are strongly encouraged to check their vaccination records

and get vaccinated if vaccination history is unclear. Even if someone has been fully vaccinated for measles, extra vaccine doses are not harmful. You do not need the vaccine if you have had the measles.

Most importantly, if you think you have measles or if someone in your family has a rash with fever, **PLEASE DO NOT GO DIRECTLY TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER. IF YOU ARE CONTAGIOUS, OTHER VULNERABLE PEOPLE CAN GET SICK!** Stay home and call your healthcare provider first. He or she will tell you what you need to do. If you are instructed to see the provider, you may be directed to a different entrance to the facility, so other people will not be exposed to disease.

For more information on measles or the MMR vaccine, please contact the Kingman County Health Department at 620-532-2221, your healthcare provider, or click on the measles information at [kdheks.gov](http://kdheks.gov).

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