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County Executive

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Commissioner of Health

# ATTENTION

## Public Health Update

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**The Westchester County Department of Health provides public health updates to members of the medical community on important issues affecting public health in Westchester**

DATE: July 31, 2015

SUBJECT: **Measles – First Fatality since 2003, 4 NYC Cases, and Dramatic Increase in Cases**

PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO PEDIATRIC, FAMILY PRACTICE, PRIMARY CARE, EMERGENCY ROOM, INTERNAL MEDICINE, INFECTIOUS DISEASE, AMBULATORY CARE AND LABORATORY STAFF

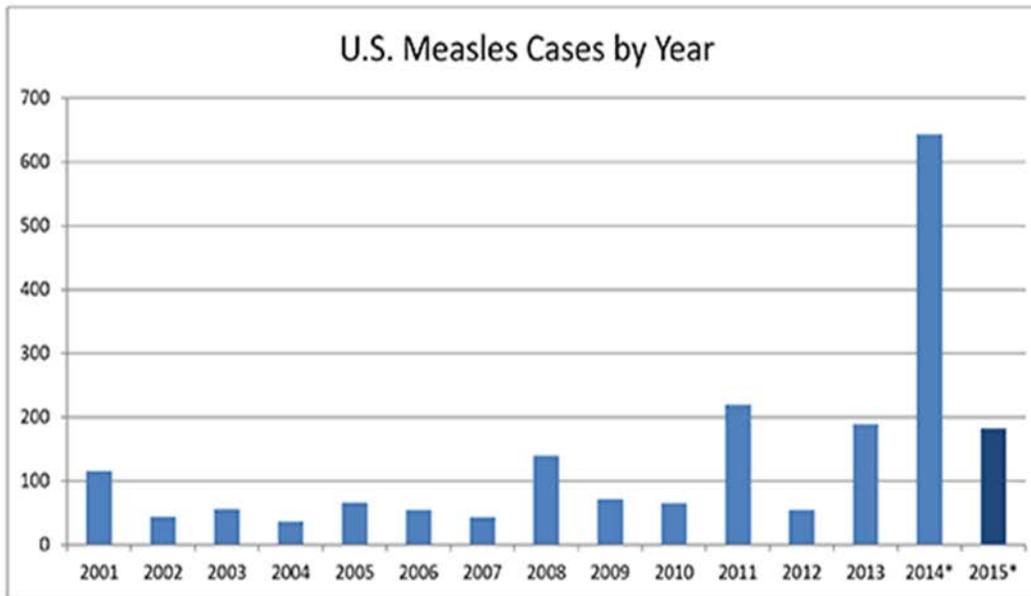
- **Ensure all patients are up to date on MMR and all other vaccines**
- **Consider measles in patients with fever and rash and ask about recent international travel or exposure to international travelers or people with measles.**
- **Promptly isolate patients suspected of having measles**
- **Collect appropriate specimens (see below) for laboratory testing and hold these in your office or facility**
- **Call WCDH at 914-813-5159 (work hours) or 914-813-5000 (After Hours 24/7)**

Dear Colleagues:

Four cases of measles have been confirmed in New York City in July. Three cases were internationally imported from China, Djibouti, and Europe, and the fourth case acquired measles on the airplane from the passenger with measles that came from China. Two cases occurred in adults of whom one had unknown vaccination status and the other had documentation of having received two measles-containing vaccines. The other two cases were unvaccinated infants.

In addition, a young woman in Washington State recently died due to an undetected measles infection that was discovered at autopsy. This was the first measles-related death reported in the U.S. since 2003. The woman had several medical conditions and was immune-suppressed. She also did not have a rash, so the measles infection was not identified until after her death.

From Jan. 1 to July 24, 183 people from 24 states and the District of Columbia have been reported as having measles, including at least 5 in New York, but none in Westchester County. Most (117) of these cases were part of a large multi-state outbreak linked to an amusement park in California. Cases have ranged from 6 weeks to 70 years of age. The United States experienced a record number of measles cases during 2014, with 668 cases from 27 states reported to CDC. This is the greatest number of cases since measles elimination was documented in the U.S. in 2000. Most of these measles cases were in unvaccinated individuals. Westchester County residents and all individuals are at increased risk for measles due to increased travel and exposure to individuals to or from areas with low and declining vaccination rates.



\*Provisional data reported to CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases



These outbreaks and the large number of recent cases underscores the need for health care providers to have an increased awareness of possible measles in patients or communities and the importance of vaccinating patients at the earliest recommended age to prevent measles.

The Westchester County Department of Health reminds all physicians and school nurses to be alert to the signs and symptoms of measles and to always consider measles when evaluating patients with fever and rash. Measles symptoms include fever, conjunctivitis, runny nose, cough and a rash which generally starts on the face, then spreads to the trunk and then the extremities, and may include the palms and soles. The rash initially appears discrete but may become confluent and lasts several days. Koplik's spots (punctate blue-white spots on the buccal mucosa) are occasionally seen. About 30% of those with measles develop complications including ear infections, pneumonia, encephalitis, and seizures. A person who had some degree of immunity to measles before infection (e.g. babies vaccinated persons who had waning immunity) may have more mild symptoms or certain classic symptoms may be absent. Infection of a mother during pregnancy is associated with birth defects miscarriage, pre-term labor, and low birth weight.

Measles is one of the most contagious infectious diseases. Although most of the population is immune, even one case of measles puts non-immune individuals at risk for becoming infected, particularly young children and the immunocompromised, both of whom are at highest risk for severe complications.

We urge you to ensure that all of your patients are up to date on their MMR (and all other) vaccines to achieve the highest vaccination rates possible in the community. This is critical to preventing both vaccinated individuals and others who cannot be effectively immunized due to age or immunosuppression from measles and other vaccine preventable diseases. The vaccination levels in many California and other communities have fallen below those necessary to prevent measles and are a significant contributing factor to recent large outbreaks and the increasing number of measles cases. California recently enacted legislation requiring mandatory vaccinations for school entry for everyone except those with medical contra-indications to such vaccines. Religious and personal belief exemptions are no longer permitted in California and 2 other states.

Children should be vaccinated with two doses of MMR vaccine, with the first dose between 12 and 15 months and the second at age four to six years old. Adults born after 1956 should have at least one measles vaccine; some people need two.

**Individuals suspected of having measles should call their providers PRIOR to the visit to ensure appropriate isolation measures. Such individuals should be isolated immediately upon arrival to a healthcare provider's office or facility, and not spend any time in a waiting room or have exposure to anyone other than the health care provider or facility staff.**

**Providers should maintain a high index of suspicion for measles in persons with compatible clinical findings who are not appropriately vaccinated or do not have proof of immunity against measles, or have traveled abroad three weeks prior to becoming ill.**

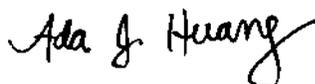
- **Notify the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) of any suspected cases of measles at (914) 813-5159, Mon-Fri 8:30 AM- 4:30 PM or 914-813-5000 after hours 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.**
- **Obtain nasopharyngeal or pharyngeal and urine specimens in viral transport media collection kits for measles culture AND serology specimens AND HOLD THESE IN YOUR OFFICE OR FACILITY for WCDH to make arrangements for testing.**
- **Review Proof of Immunity for all patients – Proof of Immunity Against Measles is defined as one of the following:**
  - Birth prior to 1/1/1957
  - Two appropriately doses of measles containing vaccines administered after 12 months of age with a minimum interval of 28 day between the two doses
  - Serologic evidence of immunity
  - Physician documentation of having had measles (not acceptable for health care workers)
- **Exclude patients from school, work, and other activities until 4 days after rash onset (patients also are infectious 4 days prior to rash onset)**

For a copy of this and other materials, visit our website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health). Click on Physicians on the bar at the top of the home page and go to Resources. As always, your assistance and cooperation in addressing important public health issues is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



**Sherlita Amler, M.D.**  
Commissioner of Health



**Ada J. Huang, M.D.**  
Deputy Commissioner, Disease Control