



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Be sure to vaccinate your children; measles remains a problem in the U.S.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. Each year approximately 60 people in the United States are reported as having measles; however, this number more than tripled to around 189 people infected with the disease in 2013. So far, there have already been 187 cases reported nationally for 2014.

Measles can stay airborne or live on surfaces for up to two hours. Symptoms include fever, runny nose, cough and a rash all over the body. Those infected can transmit the virus for about five days before the typical rash appears. Symptoms occur within one to two weeks after exposure. Measles is so contagious that any child who is exposed to it and is not immune will probably get the disease.

“Measles is still common in many countries,” Dr. Karen Landers, pediatrician and medical consultant for the Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization Division, said. “People who get measles put others who are not vaccinated at risk.” In addition, communities with pockets of unvaccinated people are vulnerable to measles outbreaks.

State law requires children to be up to date on their vaccinations prior to attending school and adolescents and college students must also be up to date on their MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) immunizations.

About 1 in 10 children with measles also gets an ear infection, and up to 1 in 20 gets pneumonia. Rarer complications are encephalitis and death. Routine MMR vaccination is recommended for all children, with the first dose given at age 12-15 months, and a second dose at age 4-6 years. Unless they have other evidence of immunity, adults born after 1956 should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Two appropriately spaced doses of MMR vaccine are recommended for health care personnel, college students, and international travelers.

Where possible, persons suspected of having measles should be promptly screened before entering waiting rooms and appropriately isolated, or have their office appointments scheduled at the end of the day to prevent exposure of other patients.

For more information, contact your local health department or visit adph.org/immunization/.