



## Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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### **Before Traveling, Make Sure Your Family is Protected from Measles!**

The holiday travel season is almost here. While many of us will be thinking of home cooked meals, time with family, and holiday shopping, it is also a time during which many people travel. Therefore, this is the perfect time to make sure you and your family are protected from measles.

Measles is caused by a virus. In the United States, measles is rare as a result of routine measles vaccinations since the 1960s. However, measles continues to be common in other countries. In the United States, most of the measles cases result from international travel. The disease is brought into the United States by unvaccinated people who get infected in other countries. They spread measles to others, which can cause outbreaks.

In Michigan, there have been 15 cases of measles during 2018, the highest number of cases in 24 years. All of these cases had international travel or were associated with cases who had traveled. At least ten of these 15 cases were not vaccinated against measles, and two had an unknown vaccination history. Some of the most recent cases happened in late October in two Michigan residents who had flown into Detroit Metro Airport.

Measles spreads easily by coughs and sneezes. It stays in the air or on surfaces where an infected person has coughed or sneezed for up to two hours. Someone with measles can spread the virus to others a few days before the rash appears. Therefore, someone who has the virus could be unaware that they are exposing others to the disease. Measles spreads so easily that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who have not been vaccinated will also become sick.

Symptoms of measles include a high fever, red eyes, cough, and runny nose. These symptoms are followed by a red, raised body rash. Illness can result in hospitalization, pneumonia, swelling of the brain, and death. Before vaccination was available, up to 500 people used to die every year in the United States due to measles.

The measles vaccine is very good at protecting against measles and is very safe. Adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get at least one dose of the vaccine. The first routine childhood measles vaccine dose is given at 12 months of age, and a second vaccine dose is given before the start of kindergarten.

For international travel, infants as young as 6 months should be vaccinated against measles. Measles vaccine, or other acceptable documentation of immunity to measles, is recommended for all persons travelling internationally. It is also important to be up to date on your measles vaccination if you plan on going through any airport, even if you or your family is not traveling internationally. It is possible to be exposed to measles in an airport by an unvaccinated, infected traveler.

Make sure you are protected this holiday season! Talk to your doctor to find out which vaccines, including the measles vaccine, are recommended for you and your family. Vaccination appointments for

can be made at the Barry-Eaton District Health Department; call (517) 541-2630 in Eaton County or (269) 798-4133 in Barry County.

Find out more information about measles at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/>.