



Health Alert Network

Tri-County Health Department

Serving Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties

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John M. Douglas, Jr., M.D. Executive Director

The pages that follow contain information critical to protecting the health of your patients and the citizens of Colorado.

HAN UPDATE

Number of pages including cover: 3

Subject: **Update - Measles Update and Sample Letter for Parents/Guardians**

Message ID: 2/5/2015 11:30:00 AM

Recipients: HAN Community Members.

From: TRI-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas County, Colorado

Recipient Instructions: **For your information. No response required.**

You have received this message based upon the information contained within our Health Alert Network Notification System. If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would like us to use, or if you have additional questions, call 720-200-1477.

Categories of Health Alert Network Messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Info Service/Public Health Brief: Provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.

You may download a copy of this HAN from the TCHD website at
<http://www.tchd.org/259/Health-Alert-Network>



Dear Superintendents, Principals, School Nurses, and Health staff:

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) is reaching out to the school districts in Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas counties regarding the measles situation in the U.S. and in Colorado. There has been a tremendous amount of media coverage and we also understand you have received communication from CDPHE as well (see recent CDPHE press release at: www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/news/measles-outbreak-importance-of-immunization).

Schools are at much higher risk for the spread of measles and TCHD wants to assure that you are receiving accurate and timely information. We also are offering our resources to address any questions or concerns you may have or are hearing from your families.

Measles has become a serious public health crisis in the U.S. We are experiencing the largest measles outbreak in recent history with over 100 cases being reported nationally since January 1, 2015. The large majority of these cases are related to an exposure in Disneyland in mid-December 2014, which has subsequently led to additional waves of transmission in California and at least 14 other states including a case from Douglas County in Colorado. In addition, there were over 600 cases of measles reported nationally in 2014, representing the highest number of cases since measles was eliminated in the U.S. in 2000.

The data clearly demonstrates the spread of measles among persons who have not been vaccinated or who are unsure about their vaccination history. The current outbreak also shows how challenging managing measles can be in a school setting. Close and prolonged contact in a school is the perfect storm for spreading measles because the disease is transmitted through the air when an ill person talks, coughs or sneezes. Measles is extremely contagious and the only way to prevent infection is by getting vaccinated. The disease can lead to hospitalization, pneumonia, or brain infection, especially among those persons with weakened immune systems.

You have likely heard about Colorado's low vaccination rates for the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine. Among kindergarten students, Colorado has the lowest reported rate – only 82% coverage. In contrast, the national median rate is 95%, with only 8 states below 90%. Low rates of vaccination coverage increase the likelihood of outbreaks in the community and create particular risks in a school setting.

In the unfortunate event that a case of measles occurs in your school, the public health response to prevent a wider outbreak will be swift in order to exclude the ill person from contact with others and to assess exposure. There is also a high likelihood TCHD would require exclusion of children who are unvaccinated due to the ease of measles spreading among persons who have no immunity. As you can imagine, a complex disease investigation and issues with exclusion have the potential to substantially disrupt school activities and learning.

Although our school districts may have already shared information with families, TCHD is requesting these action steps to keep our children and school staff safe:

- Share the brief (or similar) message noted at the bottom of this letter with your parents/guardians, particularly if you have access via email, Facebook, the school's webpage, or other electronic means.
- Ensure that your staff has been immunized with MMR vaccine. If a staff member is unsure or cannot locate records, it is simple and safe for that individual to receive a dose of vaccine from their healthcare provider.
- If resources permit, review your student immunization records to identify those students with 0 or 1 dose of MMR vaccine. Contact those parents/guardians directly and suggest that the child be vaccinated.

We have resources at TCHD to address concerns or challenges you may have in your school or school district, including provision of vaccine for those without a regular health care provider (information about our Immunization Clinics is available on our website: www.tchd.org). Please feel free to contact me, Dr. Bernadette Albanese (balbanese@tchd.org; 720-200-1534), or Bryce Andersen, MS, RN (bandersen@tchd.org; 303-363-3022).

Thank you for your efforts to work with school staff, students and families on this important public health issue.

Regards,



John M. Douglas, M.D.
Executive Director
Tri-County Health Department

MESSAGE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS:

Our administration is very concerned about the risk of measles in our school community in light of the current and expanding measles outbreak, which has already impacted Colorado with one case occurring following an exposure in Disneyland. Measles is extremely contagious and can cause serious illness including hospitalization, pneumonia, or brain infection, especially among those persons with weakened immune systems.

We are requesting that you check your child's immunization record to assure your child has received two doses of MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. Vaccination is the only way to protect yourself from infection. Ninety percent of people who are not immune to measles and come in contact with a measles case will become sick and then spread the illness to others.

If you have questions or concerns about measles or MMR vaccine, or you would like the health department to review your child's vaccine record in the Colorado Immunization Information Registry to see if they have received the vaccine, please contact the Tri-County Health Department Immunization Program at 303-451-0123. Vaccines are also available at the health department for people who do not have insurance or whose health insurance does not cover vaccines, or for families on Medicaid and CHP+ insurance. Information about clinics opportunities, locations, and times is located at <http://co-tricountyhealth.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/46>.