

Media statement

17 October 2019

Measles Alert for Noosa Heads

Queensland Health is responding to a new notification of measles in an adult male resident of New Zealand, who spent time in the Noosa Heads area while he was infectious

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service's Public Health Unit Director, Dr Rosie Muller, said it is likely that the man was exposed to measles in New Zealand, where there is known to be a current outbreak of measles.

The man was unknowingly infectious while staying in Noosa Heads and visited the Hastings Street and Noosa beach areas between the dates 5 and 9 October.

"We urge anyone who was at these locations during this period to ensure they are protected against measles and to seek medical advice if they develop symptoms," Dr Muller said.

Measles is one of the most infectious of all communicable diseases and can be acquired in public places if infectious people are present. Measles is spread by tiny droplets through coughing and sneezing.

The initial symptoms are fever, lethargy, runny nose, moist cough and sore and red eyes, followed a few days later by a blotchy red rash. The rash starts on the face then becomes widespread. Symptoms usually start around 10 days after infection but sometimes later.

"Anyone who was at these locations during these times who develops measles-like symptoms in the next one to two weeks should contact their General Practitioner (GP) for advice," Dr Muller said.

"It is very important to call the medical practice first to say you could have measles, so that staff have precautions in place when you arrive to avoid spreading the disease to others.

"Everyone should make sure they are vaccinated against measles as we are now seeing more cases in Queensland of people who have acquired measles interstate or overseas who may unknowingly spread the virus in public places."

"If you are planning overseas travel it is important to ensure that you are protected against measles before travelling."

You are generally considered to be immune to measles if:

- You were born before 1966
- You have had two documented doses of a measles containing vaccine (such as MMR)
- You have measles immunity proven on blood testing
- You have had laboratory-confirmed measles disease.

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Anyone who does not meet the above criteria is encouraged to talk to their GP regarding immunisation. The measles vaccine is provided free for any person born during or since 1966. Infants from the age of six months who are travelling are able to be vaccinated against measles.

“Measles can be very distressing for those affected and can be a severe illness even in otherwise healthy adolescents and young adults,” Dr Muller said.

Further information on measles is available on the Queensland Health website, at: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/> or by calling your GP or 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

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