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Have you been vaccinated for measles?

Queensland Health is urging all Queensland residents to ensure they have been vaccinated for measles, after cases were confirmed in Tweed Heads, Gympie and Moranbah.

Queensland Health Communicable Diseases Branch Senior Director Dr Christine Selvey said the measles virus had been confirmed in a Tweed Heads resident who visited a Coolangatta fast food outlet on 21 August.

“A tourist travelling between Surfers Paradise and Gympie and visiting various shops and restaurants and caravan parks along the way from 12-19 August has also been diagnosed with the highly infectious disease,” said Dr Selvey.

“And a local mine worker at Moranbah has been confirmed to have the measles virus.

“These people were all highly infectious while out and about in various communities.

“Public health officers are trying to identify people who may have been exposed so they can be given appropriate advice, but it is not possible to identify everyone who may have had passing contact with one of the cases.”

Measles is one of the most infectious of all communicable diseases, and can be acquired in public places such as shopping centres or on public transport if infectious people are present.

Dr Selvey said Queensland Health recommends anyone born during or since 1966, who has not had two documented doses of Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine or had proven measles, to visit their local GP for a free extra vaccination.

“We encourage all Queenslanders to check if they need to be vaccinated against measles,” Dr Selvey said.

“Queensland Health will continue to actively investigate all cases and take steps to prevent further transmission.

“In addition, we are alerting hospitals and GPs to watch for patients with measles symptoms in the coming weeks.”

Measles is extremely infectious and is spread by tiny droplets through coughing and sneezing. The virus can last for several hours in the environment.
Measles can be very distressing for those affected, and complications can include pneumonia and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

It can be a severe illness even in otherwise healthy adolescents and young adults.

The initial symptoms are:
- fever
- lethargy
- runny nose
- moist cough
- sore, red eyes
- followed a few days later by a blotchy red rash while still feverish; the rash starts on the face then becomes widespread.

Dr Selvey said symptoms usually started around 10 days after infection.

“Now is the time for people to be aware of any signs of infection,” Dr Selvey said.

“Anyone that develops measles-like symptoms in the next few weeks should contact their GP for advice, particularly if they have recently been in Coolangatta, Moranbah and in areas between Surfers Paradise and Gympie.

“It’s very important to call the medical practice first to say you could have measles, so that staff can take precautions to avoid spreading the disease to others.”

For more information on the measles virus, please contact your local GP or call Queensland Health’s phone line 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

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Media contact:  Laurise Pretty  4046 8556 / 0447 047 405