

12 December 2016

## MEASLES on the NSW North Coast

The North Coast Public Health Unit has been notified of a case of measles in a resident of Tweed Heads and anticipates that other cases may emerge over coming days.

Mr Paul Corben, Public Health Director, said that measles is highly infectious among people who are not fully immunised.

Anyone in the Tweed Heads-Coolangatta area who is not protected against measles should be alert for symptoms, particularly those who were at South Tweed Bowling Club on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016, the Gold Coast After-hours Doctor, Palm Beach on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> or Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December or The Tweed Hospital Emergency Department on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December.

“Measles is spread through coughing and sneezing. Symptoms can include fever, tiredness, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes which usually last for several days before a red blotchy rash appears. Complications range from an ear infection and diarrhoea, through to pneumonia and swelling of the brain (encephalitis)” Mr Corben said.

“Vaccination with measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is the only way to prevent infection. Two doses of the MMR vaccine are recommended for children, with the first at 12 months and the second at 18 months of age” Mr Corben said.

People born during or since 1966 who do not have two documented doses of MMR vaccine should contact their local health provider for vaccination advice. People born before 1966 are usually immune because they had measles during childhood. The MMR vaccine is free to people born during or after 1966.

“The time from exposure to the onset of symptoms is typically 8 to 18 days. People are infectious for 24 hours before symptoms appear and for the 4-5 days before the onset of rash and remain infectious until 4-5 days after appearance of the rash. Anyone who contracts measles should stay away from work, preschool, school and other public places until at least 4 days after the onset of the rash when they are no longer infectious” Mr Corben said.

Anyone with symptoms of measles should phone their General Practitioner in advance before arriving for assessment to ensure they can be isolated from other patients” Mr Corben said.

Vaccination is the only way of preventing the occurrence of measles in our community. For vaccination to be effective, a high level of MMR vaccine coverage must be maintained.

Reports on the progress towards eradication of measles in Australia show that the overwhelming majority of measles cases that occurred in Australia in recent years were acquired either when unvaccinated Australians travelled overseas or were directly linked to returning infected travellers. At the moment there are numerous places around the globe that are experiencing measles outbreaks including many locations in USA, Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan, the Middle East, Europe, China and Africa.

“Because of the ongoing risk of measles to travellers when overseas and to their families and local communities when they return home, it is very important that everyone checks their measles vaccination status before travelling overseas.

“If you were born since 1965 and haven’t received two doses of measles-containing vaccine, before leaving Australia you should talk with your GP about getting vaccinated” Mr Corben advised.

For more information on measles, please go to [www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au). If you are concerned you may be at risk of measles, phone the North Coast Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

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