

Grays Harbor County Public Health & Social Services

**Measles**

**Questions and Answers**

MAY 2019



## What is happening right now?

- The current outbreak began on May 9 in three Puget Sound counties. The most likely date and time of exposure was at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on Thursday, April 25. (A previous outbreak happened in February and March this year and was mostly confined to Clark County.)
- No cases of measles have been identified in Grays Harbor County.
- For more information on the Puget Sound outbreak, including case counts and exposure sites, visit Washington State Department of Health's website at <https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/Measles/Measles2019>.

## What can I do to prevent measles?

- You can protect yourself and your family by ensuring everyone has the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine.
- Over 95% of babies who get their first MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccination at 12 months of age are protected against measles. Over 99% are protected for a lifetime after their second MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccination.

## What is Grays Harbor County Public Health and Social Services (PHSS) doing about the current measles case?

- PHSS staff are closely monitoring information about the measles case in Pierce County, Washington.

- We regularly fax information about measles cases to our local health care providers so that they know what is happening and can consider measles as a possible diagnosis when they are evaluating a rash illness.
- We consult with health care providers who have questions about measles diagnosis.
- We provide information and education to members of the public.
- We investigate probable and confirmed measles cases and ensure that measures are taken to reduce the spread of disease.

## **When would a health care provider test for measles?**

- When a person goes to a medical provider, the provider will assess their symptoms. Some of the symptoms of measles are also seen in other common illnesses.
- Providers will test for measles if the patient has all of the symptoms of measles and if they have been in an area with a current outbreak or was recently in close contact with someone who has measles.
- Some providers may test for measles even if the patient does not have all of the symptoms and even if they have not been in close contact with a person who has measles – just to be 100% sure they can rule measles out.

## **What happens if a health care provider suspects that a person has measles?**

- If a health care provider suspects that a patient might have measles, they will order lab tests that will confirm or rule out measles. The lab test may take a few days to complete.

- They may also ask the patient to stay home and limit the people they are in close contact with until they get the test results.
- The law requires health care providers and laboratories to report any probable or confirmed cases of measles to PHSS immediately.
- PHSS can receive reports from health care providers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## What is a “case” of measles?

- In public health, a “case” is a person who has a diagnosis of a contagious disease that meets specific, defined criteria.
- A “probable case” of measles is defined as someone who, *in the absence of a more likely diagnosis*, has the symptoms of measles (fever more than 101 degrees, cough, runny nose, red watery eyes, and tiredness followed by a rash over the entire body that lasts more than 3 days).
- A “confirmed case” of measles is defined as someone who has the symptoms of measles along with positive results to specific lab tests that confirm that the person is currently infected.

## How are patients informed about a measles diagnosis?

- Patients may receive paperwork that says their doctor saw them for “measles” but that is not the same as a diagnosis of measles.
- A diagnosis of measles is made when lab results confirm the illness is measles. The health care provider will contact the patient directly to share the information from the lab result.

## **When would PHSS announce a case of measles to the public?**

- When there is a suspect or confirmed case of measles, we contact the person who is ill to conduct a thorough disease investigation. In investigations we work to identify places the person has been and people the person has been around during the period of time they are contagious.
- This helps us identify and communicate with every person that has been in contact with the person who is contagious.
- If the person was in a public place that exposed a group of people who couldn't be identified individually (like a carnival), we would announce the date, time, and location to the public so that people who were there could contact us.