



Clinton County Health Department

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“Working Together for a Healthier Community”

www.clintonhealth.org



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Measles: What North Country Residents Need to Know and Do

Plattsburgh, May 10, 2019. The measles outbreak affecting almost half of all US states, including New York, has not made its way to the North Country but the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) is choosing to be proactive by asking people to check their vaccination history. A *Frequently Asked Questions* document (Measles FAQ) has been posted on their website at <http://www.clintonhealth.org/immunizations>. This information can help residents determine whether they are protected from measles or if they need to get the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine. The website’s main page also includes the New York State Health Department’s Measles Hotline number (888-364-4837) and links to additional information.

Measles is a respiratory disease that is easily spread when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes. The measles virus can live for up to two hours in airspace where an infected person has coughed or sneezed and can be passed from an infected person even before they show a measles rash. “Measles is a highly contagious illness,” according to Nichole Louis, a Supervising Public Health Nurse at CCHD. “Ninety percent of unvaccinated people exposed to the virus will become infected. On the other hand, the recommended two doses of MMR vaccine are about ninety-seven percent effective at preventing the illness.”

If you don’t know whether you have ever received the MMR vaccine, check with your healthcare provider. If you don’t have a healthcare provider or if your current provider does not have your vaccination history, there are a few other places you can check. Vaccines given in New York State in the last eight years may have been entered into the *NYSIIS* database. Your current healthcare provider can access this information. Schools and some employers keep vaccination information. They may be able to let you know whether you ever provided them with proof of MMR vaccination.

If you can’t find a record of having received the vaccine; documentation of having had measles; or other proof of immunity; schedule an appointment with your healthcare provider. If your provider does not offer the MMR vaccine, contact the Health Department at 518-565-4848. There is no harm in getting another dose of MMR vaccine even if you are already protected against measles (or mumps or rubella).

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Measles affects the lungs and airways. It causes a rash and fever, and may lead to serious symptoms. Many people with measles have complications such as diarrhea, ear infections or pneumonia. Ear infections occur in about one out of every 10 children with measles and can result in permanent hearing loss. Measles can lead to a brain infection which can cause permanent brain damage. A small number of people who get measles will need hospitalization and if complications including pneumonia or encephalitis (brain swelling) occur, death can result. Measles during pregnancy increases the risk of early labor, miscarriage and low birth weight infants. Measles can be more severe in people with weak immune systems.

Measles outbreaks are occurring worldwide. International travelers who are not vaccinated or otherwise immune to measles and other communicable diseases run the risk of bringing these illnesses back home with them to affect their family and their community.

About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department's Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at www.clintonhealth.org or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), Twitter (@ClintonCountyHD), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).

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