

Thursday, 19 January 2017

Measles alert following contraction by international traveller

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) is urging people to watch for symptoms of measles after an adult, who contracted the highly contagious disease whilst overseas, visited a number of public areas in the Illawarra while infectious and unaware they had the disease.

Acting ISLHD Director Public Health, Ms Diane Lovatt said that advice will be given to those people that can be identified as having been in contact with the infected adult, however a general warning is being issued for anyone that visited the following locations during the period 6 - 12 January 2017:

- Wollongong Hospital on 6 January
- Dapto Mall on 7 or 8 January
- Club Lime Gym on 8 January
- Warrawong Plaza on 12 January

“We’d like to reassure members of the public that the facilities and businesses listed above are in no way at fault and it is safe to continue to visit these places,” Ms Lovatt said.

“Those people who have not received two doses of measles vaccine and may have come into contact with the infected adult should be alert to the symptoms of measles in the coming days and weeks,” she said.

Measles is very infectious. Symptoms include fever, sore eyes and a cough followed three or four days later by a red, blotchy rash spreading from the head and neck to the rest of the body. Measles can have serious complications, particularly for young children.

“The measles virus is highly contagious and is spread through the air by someone who is unwell with the disease, including via coughing and sneezing.

“If you develop the symptoms of measles, seek medical advice. Please call ahead to your GP or emergency department so that arrangements can be made to keep you away from others to minimise the risk of infection,” Ms Lovatt said.

A highly effective measles vaccine is freely available and it is vital for everyone, including adults and children, to have two doses of the measles vaccine during their lifetime

Anyone born after 1965 should have two doses of vaccine (at least four weeks apart). NSW Health offers free MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine through GPs for people born after 1965 with no records of having received two doses of MMR vaccine. For young children, the measles vaccine is recommended at 12 months and again at 18 months of age.

“It’s important that people planning to travel overseas are fully vaccinated against measles before departure to reduce their risk of contracting measles and then bringing the disease back to Australia and putting others at risk,” Ms Lovatt said.

For more information visit:

http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/Measles_Factsheet.aspx.

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

Media contact: Communications Unit on 4221 6861 or 0477 391 219

Afterhours 0422 003 764

www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au