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Press Release

For immediate release

You may be hearing a lot about measles lately. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), since January 2019, there are over 700 confirmed cases of measles in 22 states, including Massachusetts. This is the greatest number of cases reported in the U.S. since 1994 and since measles was declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2000. Public Health Nurses from North Shore communities have put together a list of the most important facts about measles.

1. **Measles can be serious.** Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clears up in a few days, but measles can cause serious health complications, especially in children younger than 5 years of age.
2. **Measles is very contagious.** Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is so contagious that if one person has it, 9 out of 10 people around him or her will also become infected if they are not protected. You can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, even up to two hours after that person has left.
3. **You can still get measles in the United States.** Every year, measles is brought into the United States by unvaccinated travelers (Americans or foreign visitors) who get measles while they are in other countries. Even if your family does not travel internationally, you could come into contact with measles anywhere in your community. Anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk.
4. **You have the power to protect yourself and your community against measles with a safe and effective vaccine.** The best protection against measles is measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR vaccine provides long-lasting protection against all strains of measles.

The CDC considers you protected from measles if you have written records showing at least one of the following:

- School-aged children (grades K-12) or adults in a setting that poses a high risk for measles transmission, such as post-high school education students, healthcare personnel, and international travelers, should have received **two** doses of vaccine against measles.
- Preschool-aged children or adults not in a high-risk setting for measles transmission should have received **one** dose of vaccine against measles.
- Adults born before 1957 and adults with laboratory confirmation of immunity to measles are considered protected.

The North Shore Public Health Nurses encourage you to speak with your doctor if you're not sure whether you are fully vaccinated. For more information about measles, mumps, and rubella viruses or vaccine, you may visit www.cdc.gov/measles, or contact Public Health Nurse Chassea Robinson at (978) 538-5931.