

17 September 2019

MEASLES ALERT – EASTERN SUBURBS

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) is urging people to watch for measles symptoms after a man at the Prince of Wales Hospital Emergency Department was diagnosed with the disease.

The man in his 40s, who believed he had been vaccinated as a child, attended the emergency department (ED) in Randwick from 9.00pm on 7 September to 3.00am on 8 September. The man likely caught measles while travelling in Queenstown, New Zealand, one of a number of areas in New Zealand currently experiencing measles outbreaks.

The SESLHD Public Health Unit is working with Prince of Wales Hospital to contact people present at the ED at the same time as the measles case.

Dr Catherine Bateman-Steel, Acting Director, SESLHD Public Health Unit, said while there is no ongoing risk to the public, people who were at the ED at the same time as the man should look out for symptoms until at least 26 September 2019.

“Children and adults who have been in the same area as a person infectious with measles are at risk of developing the disease if they were not already immune,” Dr Bateman-Steel said.

“Symptoms of measles 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.

“If you develop symptoms please arrange to see your GP as soon as possible and ensure you do not wait in the waiting room with other patients, as measles is highly contagious.

“While the risk of infection is low in fully-vaccinated people, health experts urge anyone who comes into contact with someone who has measles to remain alert for symptoms and seek medical care if they develop.”

Dr Bateman-Steel said the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is safe and highly effective, with two doses providing lifelong protection in 99 out of 100 people who are vaccinated.

“NSW Health offers free MMR vaccine via GPs for anyone born during or after 1966 who hasn’t already had two doses. If you are unsure whether you have had two doses, it is safe to have another dose.”

SESLHD is urging people travelling overseas to ensure they are fully vaccinated before heading off. Outbreaks of measles in popular tourist destinations means the risk for measles being imported into Australia is high.

Measles is highly contagious and is spread through coughing or sneezing by someone who is unwell with the disease and can remain in the air even after the person has left the room.

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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The NSW Government has invested approximately \$130 million in the 2018-19 Immunisation Program budget, including Commonwealth and state vaccines.

The latest Annual Immunisation Coverage Report shows vaccination rates in NSW are at their highest level ever, with more than 95 per cent of five year olds vaccinated against measles.

For more information on measles visit:

https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/measles_factsheet.aspx