

MEASLES OUTBREAK PROMPTS IMMEDIATE AND SUSTAINED RESPONSE FROM OCEAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

On October 24, 2018 the Ocean County Health Department first received information regarding confirmation of a measles diagnosis for an Ocean County resident. In the roughly 3 weeks since, the Ocean County Health Department has initiated or responded to literally hundreds of telephone calls and emails as it has investigated the potential sources of exposure and numerous persons who may have been exposed to this pervasive infection. According to Ocean County Public Health Coordinator Daniel E. Regenye, the 14 confirmed cases of measles and the 10 under investigation which exist as of Friday, November 16, 2018, would be much higher were it not for the immunity provided by those who have received the MMR vaccine. As such, according to Regenye, it is important to also note that the Ocean County Health Department assisted in the coordination, delivery and/or administration of 12,400 doses of the vaccine to community providers since the onset of the outbreak. The Ocean County Health Department has assisted with vaccination efforts through the deployment of 7 of its public health clinical nurses, in addition to responding with 4 health educators and numerous administrative personnel to assist in the measles response. The Ocean County Health Department has also issued a number of Health Officer Orders of Isolation and Health Officer Orders of Quarantine in an attempt to protect Public Health in the community. The Ocean County Health Department has focused much of its resources and instituted an incident command structure to address this concern. In total, the Ocean County Health Department has provided internal training and orientation to over 30 staff members of administrative, clinical, health education, epidemiology and support functions to provide for a highly coordinated and responsive effort.

Approximately 90% of susceptible people will get measles if exposed to someone with the disease. Only those who have been vaccinated or who have been sickened with measles already are not susceptible. The measles virus also lingers in the air for up to 2 hours after the person with measles has left a room or building. Added to these frightening statistics is the data which suggests 30% of measles cases result in complications including pneumonia, corneal ulceration, brain scarring and even death with infants and pregnant women being particularly susceptible to complications. “The present measles outbreak is a true public health crisis which warrants the full attention of not only the Ocean County Health Department, but also all medical providers in the outbreak area,” concluded Regenye.

Additional details and statistics will continue to be released on a daily basis from the Ocean County Health Department. Please feel free to visit the Ocean County Health Department’s website at www.ochd.org. Also, please check out our new website at www.phu2.org, to access and learn more about our Public Health is You Too! campaign to help equip you to take simple steps to improve your health.