



**Grant County Health District – Always Working for a Healthier and Safer Grant County**

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<b>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b> 07/03/08	<b>FOR INFORMATION CONTACT</b>  Alexander Brzezny, MD, MPH, Grant County Health Officer Peggy Grigg, RN, BSN, Director of Personal Health Services/Administrator
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**– GRANT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT –  
Measles Outbreak Holding at 19 Cases**

**MEASLES UPDATE** – Grant County Health District continues to be on alert for cases of measles in the community. 19 cases have been confirmed, the last of those being confirmed on June 10. Public health officials will continue to be on alert through July 12, or longer if there are more cases.

Measles is a rash illness caused by a virus. The infected person has a fever of 101 or higher and also experiences a cough, cold symptoms or red, itchy eyes, before the rash starts. Measles can be spread very easily through the air, and anyone with a rash and fever is asked to stay home, and to call their healthcare provider or facility before going in to seek care; a mask should be placed before entering the facility.

Measles is preventable through a vaccine called MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella); 2 doses are required to obtain full immunity. The first dose is usually given at age 12-15 months, with the second being given routinely at age 4-6 years. During an outbreak, the second dose can be given earlier, as long as both doses are after the age of 12 months and at least 4 weeks apart.

Measles kills more people than any other vaccine-preventable disease and is responsible for over 10% deaths of children aged below 5 years worldwide. The use of measles vaccine over the last 30 years has significantly reduced measles morbidity and mortality in the United States.

**CHICKENPOX UPDATE** – Current reports of chickenpox, or varicella, have decreased, with the ending of the current school year. For the 2008-09 school year, there are new Statewide requirements for students entering school in the fall:

**Kindergarten entry requirement:**

- 2 doses of varicella vaccine, OR
- Date of a blood test showing antibodies to chickenpox, OR
- A note signed by the healthcare provider or a notation from the healthcare provider in the web-based immunization registry, CHILD Profile, showing a history of chickenpox or shingles (caused by the same virus) is also acceptable for school entry.
- **Parents will no longer be able to report a history of disease to the school for kindergarten entry.**

### **1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grade entry requirement:**

- 1 dose of varicella vaccine will be required, OR
- Date of a blood test showing antibodies to chickenpox, OR
- A note signed by the healthcare provider or a notation from the healthcare provider in the web-based immunization registry, CHILD Profile, showing a history of chickenpox or shingles (caused by the same virus) is also acceptable for school entry.
- **Parents can still report a history of the disease for school entry for first, second, and sixth graders in the fall of 2008.**

New requirements will be phased in each year for additional grades; the new rule will be fully implemented by the 2020-2021 school year. This will include the requirement of 2 varicella vaccine or blood test or healthcare provider documentation of disease, for all grades K-12 (with NO parent report being acceptable). The State Department of Health's plan for the phasing in of the immunization requirements can be found at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/documents/varimplementplan.pdf>.

Talk with your healthcare provider regarding immunity to the chickenpox virus. The Health District can also assist families with immunizations or records for school entry.

**SALMONELLA UPDATE** – The Grant County Health District has investigated 5 cases of Salmonella during 2008. There are about 2000 different types of this common germ. These bacteria infect the intestines and occasionally the blood. Salmonella can cause serious infections in young children, frail or elderly, and people with weak immune systems.

2 of the cases investigated are the same type that was identified in 2007 in an outbreak in Grant County, and may actually have occurred originally during that outbreak. A recent nationwide salmonella outbreak has been linked to eating certain kinds of tomatoes; at this time there are no cases in Grant County that appear to be linked to tomatoes.

During summer, it is important to remember the following measure that can help reduce the risk of any food-borne illness:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after handling foods, after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, and after contact with animals. Make sure children wash their hands properly.
- Do not allow reptiles in areas where children are fed or bathed.
- Purchase only inspected eggs, animal food products, and pasteurized milk and dairy products.
- Wrap fresh meat and poultry in plastic bags at the store to keep blood from dripping on other foods.
- Refrigerate foods promptly.
- Defrost meat and poultry in the refrigerator, minimize holding them at room temperature.
- Wash cutting boards and counters used for meat or poultry preparation immediately after use.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meats, poultry, and eggs.

- Never prepare food for others if you have diarrhea.
- Do not swim in pools or lakes if you have diarrhea.

The Health District encourages people to see their healthcare provider if they experience any of the following:  
Severe diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, fever, chills, abdominal discomfort, vomiting.

For more information please call the Grant County Health District at 754-6060 or 766-7960.