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ParentPages

SHOTSMARTS FROM IMMUNIZE GEORGIA

Measles – Close to Home

Before the measles vaccine started being used in 1963, 3 to 4 million children in the U.S. would get measles every year. Five hundred children would die and 1,000 children would have life-long health problems.[1]

Two doses of the measles vaccine were recommended for children starting in the mid-1990s. Since then, there have been few measles cases in the U.S. Some measles cases have been seen though where groups of people choose to not get the measles vaccine for religious or personal beliefs.[1]

In 2008, the U.S. has seen more people with measles, the most since 2001.[1] By April 25, 2008, 64 people came down with the measles in nine states. In just over a month, from April 25 to May 31, 2008, this number almost doubled to 115 people with measles in 16 states.[2] As of May 31, 2008, one person from Georgia got the measles after a visit to the Middle East.

Some of the U.S. measles cases or outbreaks started after people who had not received the measles vaccine traveled to countries with current large outbreaks or cases of measles. These countries include Switzerland, Israel, India and Japan. Because these people had not received a measles vaccine, they caught measles and brought it home. In other cases, measles was passed to U.S. residents from ill visitors from other countries.[1]

Of the people with measles between January 1 and April 25, 2008, 99 percent had not received their measles vaccine or it was not known if they had received their measles vaccine. Two-thirds of the measles cases were in children who were old enough to have the measles vaccine but had not received it due to personal or religious exemptions. Thirteen of the 59 U.S. residents were less than 12 months of age and too young to get the measles vaccine.[1]

Measles has been passed on to others in busy settings such as childcare centers, schools, healthcare facilities and doctors' offices. Measles is very easy to catch as it can stay active for a couple of hours. If active measles virus was put in a room with people who have not received their measles vaccine, most everyone in that room would get measles.[3]

In 30 percent of people with measles (3 out of 10 people), serious problems can happen such as pneumonia and/or encephalitis (swelling of the brain).[4] Several of the people with measles have been admitted to the hospital, but as of May 31, 2008, there had been no deaths.

As a parent, what can you do?

- If you have questions about measles or the vaccine, talk with your doctor.
- Check your immunization (shot) records. If you or your child has not received two measles vaccines, be sure to see your doctor to get this vaccine.
- Remember that infants (babies) less than 12 months of age are too young to be vaccinated against measles and can catch measles easily. Be sure other people in the household, including older siblings and family members, get their measles vaccine to help protect infants.
- If you or anyone in your family is planning a trip to a foreign country, including European countries, make sure everyone is up to date on all their vaccines.

* For easy access to listed Web sites, please visit www.choa.org/vaccines and open the pdf to this parent page.

1. "Measles--United States, January 1-April 25, 2008." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 57, no. 18 (May 9, 2008): 494-498. http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5718a5.htm

2. Provisional unpublished data from the CDC. Curtis Allen, spokesperson. June 9, 2008.

3. "CDC Update on Measles Outbreaks in United States." CDC Media Relations Transcript, May 1, 2008. http://www.cdc.gov/media/transcripts/2008/t080501.htm

4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases. Atkinson W, Hamborsky J, McIntyre L, Wolfe S, eds. 9th ed. Washington, DC: Public Health Foundation, 2006.

Meningococcal Disease – Close to Home

Picture your healthy teen getting sick with a headache, stiff neck and high fever. In a few hours, he starts having nausea and vomiting. He is confused and sensitive to bright light. Your teen now has a red splotchy rash.

This can be very scary for you and your child. Two teens in Georgia died this way during the 2007-2008 school year. Within 24 hours of these symptoms starting, they both died from a disease that can be prevented with a vaccine. This disease is called meningococcal meningitis (meningitis).

Meningococcal meningitis is a bacterial infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. These bacteria can also infect the bloodstream and spread through the body.

There is a vaccine that protects against four types of the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. Two of these types are the most common in the U.S. and are responsible for most of the meningitis cases in the country. The two Georgia teens that died had one of the types that could have been prevented with the vaccine.

The risk for meningitis is higher for those between 15 to 24 years of age and college students living in dorms than for other age groups. Meningitis is spread through close personal contact, such as coughing, sneezing, kissing or sharing items that touch a person's mouth (utensils, drinks, cigarettes or lip balm). Those who get meningitis may lose an arm or leg—while others may die.

This disease can quickly take over the body with little warning. There is nothing to stop the disease once it takes over the body. The meningitis vaccine (shot) is one shot that is recommended for teens starting at age 11. Don't let this happen to your teen – make sure he or she gets the meningitis vaccine.

For more details, visit the below Web sites:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Meningitis Information
http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/

National Meningitis Association
http://www.nmaus.org/ ■

"I received my meningitis vaccination and I am ready for college."

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