



DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Promoting and protecting health, well-being, self-sufficiency, and safety of all in Marin County.

April 30, 2019



Hyacinth Guillermo Hinojosa
ACTING DIRECTOR

Matthew Willis, MD, MPH
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

Lisa M. Santora, MD, MPH
DEPUTY PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

3240 Kerner Boulevard
San Rafael, CA 94901
415 473 4163 T
415 473 2326 F
415 473 3232 TTY
www.marincounty.org/hhs

Dear Parents/Guardians:

I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the current measles outbreak in California, to encourage that all unvaccinated children receive the measles vaccine as soon as possible, and to outline expectations should there be a case of measles in a Marin school.

As of last week, there have been 38 cases in California and over 700 cases in the U.S. in 2019. This is the highest number of cases since measles was nearly eliminated in 2000. Several Bay Area counties have reported cases in this outbreak. Marin County has been spared thus far, but we are vulnerable. Although childhood vaccination rates are 94 percent overall, in some Marin schools less than half of students are fully vaccinated. Additionally, measles is more common abroad, and Marin hosts visitors from all over the world and our residents are frequent travelers.

Measles is a very contagious airborne illness and is highly preventable through vaccination. The virus is spread by sharing the same area with an infected person, especially if that person coughs or sneezes. Individuals are contagious 4 days before they develop symptoms and may unknowingly make others ill.

Measles usually starts with a high fever, runny nose, red and irritated eyes, and a rash. The rash is red and bumpy, starts on the face and moves down the body. Some people may suffer complications, such as pneumonia or brain swelling, and may need hospitalization.

The best way to prevent measles is the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. Children routinely get their first dose of the MMR vaccine at 12-15 months of age, and the second dose before beginning kindergarten. This combination is more than 98% effective in preventing measles.

If your child is unvaccinated or cannot provide laboratory confirmation of immunity and there is a case in their school, they will be excluded from attending school for 21 days to protect themselves and to limit further spread of disease.

It takes two weeks to develop immunity after receiving a measles vaccine. Unvaccinated or under vaccinated children should be vaccinated as soon as possible through their healthcare provider so they will have protection and to prevent future absences from school.

As Public Health Officer, I would like to thank you for doing your part to keep our Marin families healthy.

Sincerely,

Matt Willis, MD, MPH
Marin County Public Health Officer