

News Release

For Immediate Release

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History of Measles Vaccine

Measles disease has been around for a very long time. In the 9th century a Persian doctor published one of the first written accounts of the disease. In 1757 a Scottish physician identified that measles was caused by an infectious agent.

In 1912 measles became a nationally notifiable disease that required health care providers and laboratories to report all diagnosed disease. It was noted in the first 10 years of reporting that there was an average of 6,000 measles deaths each year.

Measles vaccine research began in 1954 and by 1963 the first measles vaccine became available. An effort to eliminate measles in the US by CDC began in 1978. By 1981 the number of reported cases was noted to be 80% less than previous years. In 2000 Measles was declared eliminated from the United States, meaning that there was 12 months or more with the absence of continuous disease transmission.

“Measles is one of the most highly contagious vaccine-preventable diseases. Measles can remain in the air for up to two hours after someone that is contagious has visited. People who are unvaccinated or are not immune and are exposed to measles have a 90% chance of getting this disease,” states Melissa Propp RN, Public Health Nurse with Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department.

The measles virus is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Persons with measles can spread the disease up to four days before the onset of the rash and up to four days after the rash begins, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

CDC recommends that people get MMR vaccine to protect against measles, mumps, and rubella. Children should get two doses of MMR vaccine, starting with the first dose at 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose at 4 through 6 years of age.

Teens and adults should also be up to date on their MMR vaccination. According to the CDC adults who were vaccinated prior to 1968 with either inactivated (killed) measles vaccine or measles vaccine of unknown type should be revaccinated with at least one dose of live attenuated measles vaccine. This recommendation is intended to protect those who may have received killed measles vaccine, which was available in 1963-1967 and was not effective.

If you were born before 1957 you may have natural immunity. If you have questions about whether you may need an MMR booster talk with your health care provider.

If you have further questions about measles or the MMR vaccine call SWNPHD nurse Melissa Propp.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov. Call (308) 345-4223 or stop by the office at 404 West 10th Street in McCook.

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