



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

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**Overseas Travelers Warned to Check Vaccination
Protection for Measles**

Idaho public health officials want to remind travelers planning trips abroad to check their immunization records to ensure they are protected against measles. Although measles was officially eradicated from the United States in 2000, it is still present in other regions of the world including Europe, Asia, the Pacific and Africa. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced this week that the United States is currently experiencing its worst surge of measles cases since 1994 from infections brought in by overseas travelers. Vaccination against measles is extremely safe and effective.

"People should be aware of diseases they may encounter in other parts of the world, which is not always as safe as we are accustomed to here in Idaho," says Dr. Christine Hahn, state epidemiologist. "Many people get immunized for the exotic diseases in countries they travel to, but measles should be at the top of that list for both adults and children. Before traveling, be sure to talk to your health care provider about immunizations to make sure you stay safe and healthy."

Measles is one of the most contagious viral diseases known. It causes a high fever, cough, runny nose and redness of the eyes, followed by a rash on the face that spreads down the body. An average of one in four people who contract measles will need hospitalization. Measles can cause serious complications like pneumonia, and can be fatal. The good news is that there is a highly effective vaccine to prevent infection.

The measles vaccine, as part of the measles-mumps-rubella or "MMR" vaccine, is routinely given to all children after their first birthday and again before kindergarten. Because the risk of complications or death from measles is highest among very young children, the CDC recommends infants aged six to 11 months receive one dose of MMR vaccine before traveling internationally; children aged 12 months and older should receive two doses separated by at least a month. Two doses of MMR vaccine will protect almost all people against measles for a lifetime.

International travelers of all ages should be up to date with their vaccinations. Adults born before 1957 are presumed to be immune because almost all were exposed to measles as children. Anyone unsure of their vaccination history should ask about receiving a dose of MMR vaccine before traveling.

“We want traveling Idaho residents to fully enjoy their trips without bringing back any infectious diseases as souvenirs,” says Dr. Hahn. “In public health, measles is a disease that really worries us, so please check your immunizations before traveling abroad to stay healthy.”

To find more information about measles, visit www.cdc.gov/measles/.

General information about vaccines is available online at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.