



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2011

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MEASLES CASE REPORTED ON A MAY 17 SAN DIEGO BOUND FLIGHT *HHSA Investigating Public Exposure*

Passengers on a recent flight from Houston to San Diego are being warned about exposure to measles, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) announced today. A passenger on Continental Airlines flight #1689 on May 17 was hospitalized shortly after landing in San Diego with an illness confirmed yesterday to be measles.

County officials are in the process contacting 58 passengers with local addresses to inform them of the measles exposure and to determine if they have been vaccinated. Fifty-five passengers on the flight with addresses outside of San Diego County are being contacted by their local or state health departments.

The person with measles first became ill in London on May 14 and had never been vaccinated for the disease. She traveled to the United States on Continental Airlines flight #0005 from London to Houston on May 17. Her symptoms worsened on the flight to San Diego and she was taken by ambulance to a local hospital. No one in the San Diego International Airport terminal was exposed to measles because of the precautions taken by paramedics. Fifteen passengers on the international flight are also being contacted by public health officials.

"Measles is highly contagious and is easily spread by coughing, sneezing, or coming in close contact with an infected person," said Eric McDonald, M.D., M.P.H., County Deputy Public Health Officer. "Anyone on the flight should watch for symptoms and contact their healthcare provider if they show any signs of the disease. Providers should be called in advance so that infection control measures may be taken to prevent exposure to others."

Measles develops seven to 18 days after exposure. Early symptoms include cough, runny nose, and red eyes with a distinctive red rash appearing in one to four days later. A person is considered contagious four days before the rash appears. The rash begins on the face and head then proceeds downward and outward to the hands and feet. It fades in the same order it began, from head to feet.

"The best way to prevent measles is by getting the measles vaccine," said Dr. McDonald. "Many people are unaware that there are ongoing measles outbreaks overseas, including several countries in Europe. Everyone who travels should protect themselves by being up to date on recommended immunizations."

All persons born in 1957 or after should have documentation of at least one dose of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine or other evidence of immunity to measles. The CDC recommends two doses of the vaccine; the first at 12 months of age, and the second between ages 4 and 6.

Complications from measles are more common in children younger than 5 years of age and adults 20 years and older. Complications can include diarrhea, ear infection and pneumonia. Death can occur from severe complications and the risk is higher among younger children and adults. There is no treatment for measles. Bed rest, fluids and control of fever are recommended. Persons with complications may need treatment for their specific problem.

Any passenger from the involved flights who is concerned about exposure may contact County officials at (858) 565-5255. For more information about measles, other vaccine-preventable diseases and the shots that protect against them, please call the HHSA Immunization Branch at (866) 358-2966 or visit the website at www.sdiz.org.

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