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Happy Spring, North Shore families!

As spring break quickly approaches, I wanted to send a note about the increase in measles cases in the United States, especially in Florida, where so many of our North Shore families plan to travel for some relief from our Wisconsin winter.

Measles is a highly contagious virus and presents a significant danger, especially to those not fully vaccinated. It's so infectious that one person with measles can spread it to 90% of non-immunized people around them. Measles is especially risky for kids under 5 and can cause serious health issues.

As of February 22, 2024, a total of 35 measles cases have been reported across 15 states, including Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York City, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington. Therefore, I want to encourage you to take some proactive steps to protect our families and the community from this preventable disease.

Here are some important steps you can take to protect your family before and while traveling:

Ensure Vaccination: The most effective way to prevent measles is through vaccination. Make sure that everyone in your family is up to date on their measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines before traveling. If anyone is not vaccinated, please consult your healthcare provider to schedule vaccination before your trip.

Stay Informed: Stay informed about measles outbreaks in your destination and along your travel route. Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for updated information and travel advisories related to measles outbreaks.

Practice Good Hygiene: Encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating, after using the restroom, and after being in public spaces. Carry hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes for times when soap and water are not readily available.

Avoid Close Contact with Sick People: Teach your children to avoid close contact with people who appear to be sick, particularly those exhibiting symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, and fever.

Seek Medical Attention: If you suspect that you or a family member may have been exposed to measles or are experiencing symptoms like fever, cough, runny nose, and rash, seek medical attention promptly. Inform healthcare providers about your travel history and any potential exposure to measles.

Working together, we can help protect folks from measles and (other preventable diseases) while traveling on our well-earned spring breaks. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the North Shore Health Department's public health nurses or your primary care provider. Sincerely, as your local health department, we hope you and your family have a safe and healthy spring break.

Please take good care,

Becky Rowland, MPH, MBA
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