



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Measles vaccines are highly effective in preventing the disease

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The measles vaccine is very effective in preventing measles, and the Alabama Department of Public Health reminds parents that it is important to vaccinate their children according to the immunization schedule of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

Studies show one dose of the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine is between 93 and 97 percent effective in preventing measles, and when two doses are given, effectiveness ranges from 95 to 99 percent.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus and so contagious that any unvaccinated child exposed to it will probably get the disease. Symptoms include fever, runny nose, cough and a rash all over the body. Those infected can transmit the virus for about five days before the typical rash appears. Symptoms occur within one to two weeks after exposure. Common complications of measles are ear infections and less often pneumonia. Rarer complications are inflammation of the brain and death.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson said, "I believe very strongly in the safety and effectiveness of vaccine and the need for immunization."

State law requires children to be up to date on their vaccinations prior to attending childcare and school based on the ACIP Schedule. MMR vaccination is recommended for all children, with the first dose given at age 12-15 months, and a second dose at age 4-6 years. Unless they have other evidence of immunity, adults born after 1956 should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Also, two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended for health care personnel, college students and international travelers.

In addition, communities with pockets of unvaccinated people are vulnerable to measles outbreaks. At least 95 percent of people in a community need to be immunized to achieve herd immunity to protect children too young to be vaccinated and those who have an illness or medical condition which precludes their taking or responding to the vaccine.

Dr. Karen Landers, pediatrician and medical consultant for the Alabama Department of Public Health Immunization Division, said, "Disease control prevention and investigation is part of our daily public health activities and our charge is to protect the citizens of Alabama. While we in Alabama currently have a high rate of vaccination, we will see a measles outbreak in this state if

children are not vaccinated,” she cautioned. Alabama pediatricians have also expressed their support for recommended immunizations for vaccine-preventable diseases.

Dr. Landers said parents who fear side effects of vaccinations should know that measles is a serious disease with life-threatening complications, and concerns about links between vaccines and autism are baseless. She stated, “I can say as a scientist and as a pediatrician that the measles vaccine does not cause autism.”

The 2013-14 ADPH School Entry Self Survey survey found more than 92 percent of Alabama’s kindergartners had received the MMR vaccination. Religious exemptions were filed for 447 kindergarten students and 70 others had medical exemptions from vaccinations.

Measles can stay airborne or live on surfaces for up to two hours, so people suspected of having measles should be screened before entering medical waiting rooms and isolated, or have their office appointments scheduled at the end of the day to prevent exposure of other patients.

For more information, contact your local health department or visit adph.org/immunization/.