VACCINATIVE | Vaccination information for Natives by Natives

Measles 101

The US stopped the spread of measles. Now the disease is back. We are seeing many outbreaks – especially where people are not vaccinated.

This handout contains important information about measles - including what it is, how it spreads, and whether you should be worried.

"We did not see measles in the US for about 20 years. This was due to the power of vaccines."

– Dr. LaKota Scott, Naturopathic Doctor and Diné Birth Worker

Quick recovery

People with measles often get flu-like symptoms, like coughing, sneezing, and fever. You might also see a red rash on your skin and small white spots inside your mouth. Most people with measles recover quickly.

So, what's the big deal?

After someone gets measles, they're more likely to get sick later. Measles can destroy our body's memories about how to fight infections. So, the next time you come across flu, COVID, or another infection, it's possible your body will react like it's never seen it before. This means you are more likely to get sick.

Measles sickness can also be serious. **10% of people** who get measles need to be **hospitalized.**

How measles can kill

Most people who die from measles die from pneumonia – an infection that makes it hard to breathe. Pneumonia is the most common cause of death for kids.

About **1 in 500 kids** who get measles die from it.

Measles can also result in brain swelling. This can lead to deafness, learning disabilities, and sometimes death.

Groups more at risk

Certain people are at higher risk for getting dangerously sick from measles. These include pregnant people, kids younger than 5, and people who have trouble fighting diseases.

We don't know for sure who will recover quickly or get seriously sick from measles. Sometimes healthy people get very sick and die.

> There is so much misinformation out there. I would urge our relatives to arm themselves with updated knowledge about vaccines, their safety, and their effectiveness

– Dr. Jeffrey Henderson, MD, MPH, Lakota & Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, President and CEO of the Black Hills Center for American Indian Health

How easily does measles spread?

Measles spreads *very* easily. If a person with measles spends time in a room, 90% of people who are not vaccinated will get infected.

Measles spreads best *before* you feel sick. So, people often spread measles to others without realizing it. Also, measles virus stays in the air for up to 2 hours. This means you don't even need to share a room with someone and you can still get sick.

Measles vaccine

Two shots of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine is 97% effective. This protection often lasts a lifetime.

We've been using the same vaccine for about 50 years. We know it's safe. Bad reactions are *very* rare. You can expect mild side effects – like fever, sleepiness, rash, and soreness/redness where the vaccine was given. These are normal. They should go away in a few days.

Protecting the community

When we are vaccinated, it is less likely that we get sick. It's also less likely that we make others sick. It's our responsibility to take care of ourselves and others.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

Additional information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative.

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