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16 May 2008: Measles Accelerated Schedule Now Expanded to Pinal County

Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) is recommending that healthcare providers in Pinal County now use an accelerated measles vaccination schedule in children due to a case of measles being identified in a Pinal County child. This case brings the number of confirmed cases of measles in Arizona to 22.

The accelerated schedule means that children ages 6 months through 11 months of age should receive a single dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. Children \geq 12 months of age should receive their first dose of MMR as soon after their first birthday as possible. Instead of waiting for school entry to receive their second dose, children should receive their second dose of MMR as soon as possible while making sure that at least 4 weeks have passed between the first and second dose.

The accelerated schedule is being recommended because young children are at high risk of complications from measles and because 2 doses of MMR are required to give full protection against measles. In addition, most children ages 6-12 months old are susceptible to measles.

Measles is an extremely contagious viral disease and is spread through the airborne route. Patients with measles have a prodrome of fever, conjunctivitis, cough, coryza, and malaise for 3-5 days before the rash appears on their face and upper body, and then spreads down over the entire body over the following 3-4 days.

Measles should be considered in any patient with fever, conjunctivitis, cough, coryza, and malaise, as well as any patient who presents with fever and a morbilliform rash. Measles should also be suspected in people born before 1957 who have compatible clinical symptoms, since a small percentage are susceptible.

A healthcare worker who suspects that a patient may have measles should contact their local health department immediately. Measles testing with serology and viral culture can be facilitated by the local health department. Unimmunized contacts of measles cases can be vaccinated within 3 days of exposure, or given gamma globulin within 6 days of exposure to prevent or ameliorate the illness.

More information on measles can be found on the ADHS measles website at <http://www.azdhs.gov/measles> and at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention measles website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/default.htm>

At the present time, ADHS has only recommended the accelerated schedule for children starting at 6 months of age for Pinal and Pima County. For further questions, please contact the local health department or the ADHS Office of Infectious Disease Services at (602) 364-4562.