

Media Release



Health
South Western Sydney
Local Health District

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Measles outbreak sparks health warning for travellers to the Philippines

An ongoing measles outbreak in the Philippines has prompted an urgent reminder for people travelling to the Philippines to check they and their children are fully immunised for measles before their departure.

Dr Leena Gupta, Director SWSLHD Public Health, said measles is highly contagious among people who are not fully immunised.

"Measles is spread through coughing and sneezing, and is very contagious," Dr Gupta said.

"Measles can have serious complications ranging from swelling of the brain and pneumonia to ear infections.

"In recent weeks there have been 10 cases of measles reported in NSW. Seven were associated with travel to the Philippines – including 3 young children who were admitted to hospital. Cases from the Philippines have also been reported in Western Australia and Queensland.

"I urge everyone planning on travelling to the Philippines to ensure they are up to date with their vaccinations before they travel. Anyone born during or after 1966 should have two doses of measles vaccine (at least 4 weeks apart). Even one dose gives around 90 per cent protection.

"Children should receive measles vaccine at 12 months and a second dose at 18 months. Babies who are travelling before their vaccines are due can be given the first dose as early as 9 months of age.

"Children over 18 months who have not had their second dose of measles vaccine should be vaccinated.

"People returning from the Philippines should be on the look out for symptoms of measles," she said.

Measles starts with a fever, cough, sore red eyes and a runny nose for several days before a blotchy rash appears. People who have these symptoms should see a doctor - but call ahead to protect others in the waiting room because it is very contagious.

If you think that you or a family member may have measles and have been to the Philippines, ring the GP's surgery first and let the GP know that you could have been exposed to measles in the Philippines and that you have symptoms.

For more information on measles, please go to www.health.nsw.gov.au.