



Four outbreaks and 170 cases of measles reported in 17 states

Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Nevada, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Washington

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) February 27, 2015

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Measles Cases

In late January, the CDC issued a Health Advisory to notify public health departments and healthcare facilities about a multi-state outbreak of measles and to provide guidance for healthcare providers nationwide. As of February 27th, 170 people from 17 states and the District of Columbia were reported to have measles. Most of the cases (125) are part of a large ongoing multi-state outbreak linked to two Disney amusement parks in California with three other outbreaks reported in Illinois, Nevada, and Washington, respectively.



Measles is a serious, highly infectious, airborne disease that typically begins with fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes. Within a few days a red rash appears, usually first on the face and then spreading downward to the rest of the body. The CDC warns that infected people can spread the disease even before they know they are sick or have a rash and can sometimes be fatal, especially for babies; individuals too young to be vaccinated; and people with underlying medical conditions who can't be vaccinated.

Measles and the Dental Office

Because the disease presents in the head and neck region and/or the mouth first, dentists should be prepared in the event a patient shows up with certain signs and symptoms of the disease. The three main signs in the oral cavity indicative of measles are Koplik spots; atypical gingivitis with pustules and necrosis; and operculitis.

It is not uncommon that some of these oral lesions are the first indication that a person has either an infectious disease or an underlying systemic disease. It is recommended that because some of these signs and symptoms are subtle it's very important to do a thorough soft tissue examination along with the dental examination.

Other primary, nondescript signs and symptoms that can help dentists recognize patients with undiagnosed measles are a high fever, often 104 or greater, malaise; and loss of appetite. These are followed by an itchy, red rash that starts on the face and then moves down the neck to the rest of the body.”

Health care providers treating patients with fever and a rash should consider the possibility of measles and ask patients about travel to international destinations and domestic venues that are popular with international visitors. If patients have the measles symptoms, and believe they might have been exposed, you should strongly suggest that they contact their care provider, adding that unless it's emergency, it's best to contact their provider by phone to prevent spread in doctor's offices.