

Script – Print - Measles Prevention

Outbreak has physicians urging vaccination

While the largest outbreak is in the northwest US, enough cases of measles have popped up in other states - including Illinois - for physicians to caution parents to get their children and themselves vaccinated.

That's because measles is highly contagious and can lead to more serious complications.

The virus has been of little worry in the US in recent years, but is more endemic in other parts of world. That, says OSF Medical Group Family Physician Muhammad Habib, MD, is the biggest concern. He points to possible exposure to measles at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, when an international traveler was travelling through it.

"Outbreaks are serious, because it can cause complications, especially in the younger folks - 5 years or younger", says Muhammad Habib, MD, Family Practice Physician with OSF Medical Group. "They can have simple complications, like diarrhea, ear infections. But they can also have more serious complications, like pneumonia or swelling of the brain - that we usually use the term encephalitis for."

Of the one in one thousand encephalitis cases, Dr. Habib says statistics from the Centers for Disease Control show one to two people die from measles.

Being properly vaccinated is the key. However, Dr. Habib says doctors are constantly battling skeptical parents because of the misinformation about the MMR vaccine - mostly on social media.

"There may be some misconceptions or misbeliefs that some people have developed from old studies that linked vaccines to autism and other issues," says Muhammad Habib, MD, Family Practice Physician with OSF Medical Group. "And they were, as you all know, they were not true studies, falsifications were there. People are scared of possible side effects. There's a lot of social media and people put things on social media without any scientific backing to it. So, that creates confusion and concerns among parents."

While children are most at risk, Dr. Habib says adults also need to take precautions - especially if they have never been vaccinated and if they plan to travel overseas.

"The two doses of childhood vaccines that we do - the first one for measles is done at between 12 and 15 months of age," says Muhammad Habib, MD, Family Practice Physician with OSF Medical Group. And it's important that we repeat or get the second dose, or the booster dose, at four to five years of age. But if someone has not received it, they don't have record of it, they should get the vaccines done. To prevent these outbreaks from happening and not only saving yourself from getting it, but other people too."

Bottom line - while you should stay informed about measles and the latest outbreak, Dr. Habib says you should always consult with someone like him - a family physician.