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No measles cases in West Virginia despite national surge

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services (OEPS) reports that West Virginia has not had any cases of measles this year while the rest of the nation is seeing an increase. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported earlier this month that 89 cases of measles have occurred so far this year in the United States, up from an average of about 50 cases annually. OEPS data indicate that the state has had only one case of measles in the last ten years (2009).

State Epidemiologist and OEPS Director Dr. Loretta Haddy said, "West Virginia has a strong school entry law which requires vaccination against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and there is no doubt that could be playing a role in helping protect our children." She noted, "Measles is highly contagious and this is why vaccination is so important, especially for the traveling public."

The World Health Organization reports that there have been 9,060 cases of measles reported worldwide as of April 6, 2011. Measles symptoms include fever, runny nose, cough, eye inflammation and rash. Some infected develop pneumonia and inflammation of the brain while some die.

Health officials note the worst year for measles in the last decade in the U.S. was in 2008 when 140 cases were reported. While no measles cases exist in West Virginia today, Dr. Haddy said "Measles is a growing problem worldwide and as cases continue to increase in the U.S., vaccination is the best choice for protection. The disease is only an airplane ride away."

To learn more about protecting yourself and your family against measles go to www.wvimmunization.org or call your local health department.