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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Health Officer Says Measles Is Knocking On West Virginia's Door; Home Remedies Won't Cure Or Prevent The Disease**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Measles cases have now been detected in 13 states nationwide, including several that border West Virginia. Kanawha County's Health Officer is concerned that disinformation about treatment for the disease is putting the public at risk.

Dr. Steven Eshenaur, Health Officer and Executive Director of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, emphasized that remedies such as Vitamin A, Cod Liver Oil or good nutrition will neither prevent nor cure measles. Eshenaur encourages everyone to check their immunization status for the MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella) because most people who get the disease are unimmunized or under-immunized by at least one shot.

"Measles is one of the most contagious diseases known to man," Eshenaur explained. "It's not a rite of passage. It's not a simple rash. It can be devastating and deadly. It's not curable with home remedies and a good diet. Those claims have no scientific basis. Immunization is the only known prevention that is effective in protecting people from the disease."

In recent weeks, cases of measles have popped up in Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Maryland with possible exposures of travelers in Virginia and West Virginia.

"Frankly, that's just a little too close for comfort," Eshenaur said. "Measles is knocking on our door, and we need to take precautions. The only effective protection is to make sure your immune system has a fighting chance against measles: get vaccinated."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a Health Advisory to notify clinicians, public health officials, and potential travelers about a deadly measles outbreak in

[Texas](#) and [New Mexico](#). Together the number of confirmed cases in both states is in the hundreds. Two people have died, a child in Texas and an adult in New Mexico. Since that Health Advisory was released earlier this week, measles has been detected in 13 states.

Measles is so highly communicable it can be transmitted by an infected person up to four days prior to the onset of the rash and four days after the rash erupts. “People can spread it to everyone around them before the first telltale rash appears on their skin,” Eshenaur explained. “Outbreaks like this can result in death, and as many as one in five require hospitalization. I don’t want to see that happen in West Virginia.”

“You’ll hear that it is a rite of passage among children. It’s not a simple rash,” Eshenaur said. “If you’re thinking about not vaccinating your child for any reason other than medical reasons, please reconsider. We all feel a responsibility to protect our kids from childhood diseases and vaccines are the proven way to keep our children safe and healthy.”

It’s important that adults check their immunization records and add a MMR booster, if needed. West Virginia’s current childhood immunization laws have made sure school-aged children are immunized against measles, whooping cough, polio and tetanus for decades. “Right now, our children are protected because we have herd immunity. Vaccines did that. Remember, the easiest disease to treat is the one you never get.”

What if a person cannot take the MMR for medical reasons? “This is where herd immunity comes in. It’s up to the rest of us to get vaccinated so we protect those who cannot for medical reasons. This is how it works. We take care of each other when we take care of ourselves,” Eshenaur said.

The [Measles-mumps-rubella \(MMR\) vaccination](#) has been around for decades and is proven to prevent or lessen the impact of those viruses. “If you are current on your MMR, you also help prevent bringing the viruses into your community, home and workplace if you travel. Also, many countries won’t let you in without it,” Eshenaur said.

**For questions about immunization records, titer tests, or to make an appointment for a booster, please call KCHD at 304-344-8080.**