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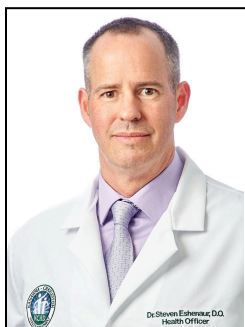
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Health Officer Warns About The Dangers Of Measles As First Case In 15 Years Hits West Virginia

CHARLESTON, W.VA. – This week West Virginia experienced its first documented case of measles in 15 years with exposure to West Virginians across four states and 30 counties, including Kanawha County.

According to a press release from the West Virginia Department of Health, 152 people were exposed, and 62 of those lack documentation of adequate immunization against measles and are considered to be at high risk of infection.

Dr. Steven Eshenaur, Health Officer and Executive Director of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, warned that measles is one of the most highly contagious diseases



there is, but that it is easily preventable with immunization. People with measles are highly contagious four days before they show a rash and four days after the rash begins. Other symptoms can include fever, conjunctivitis and flu-like symptoms.

“Measles is one of the most infectious diseases known to medicine. In the U.S., approximately half of measles patients require hospitalization,” Eshenaur said. “Measles is so serious that it can cause encephalitis, pneumonia, hearing loss and death, and it is so highly contagious that by

the time you’ve been exposed you’ve also passed it on to a multitude of people who then unknowingly do the same.”

Eshenaur wants people to remember that immunization against this disease has been effective for several decades — since the 1960s. “Full Immunization against measles works,” he said. “If you had your childhood shots so long ago that you cannot recall when and

where, there is a simple blood test you can take to check your immunity to the disease. And yes, adults can have booster shots.”

Those unsure of their measles immunization status can contact their primary health care provider or the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department. The measles blood test is not covered by most insurances. It is \$65. The MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) booster is also available at KCHD. Not all insurances cover the MMR booster for adults. Out of pocket, it is \$143. To make an appointment, call 304-348-8080.

“Preventing this kind of outbreak is why statewide medical professionals fought so hard to preserve West Virginia’s strong childhood immunization laws to protect our children from potentially deadly and debilitating diseases like measles. When we protect them as children, it carries on into adulthood. It’s a really positive outcome for a simple series of shots.”

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