It's Not Too Late to Get Your Child Vaccinated for Measles

The recent measles outbreak linked to Disneyland visitors has renewed concerns that this highly contagious and preventable disease is making a resurgence. Dr. Srilatha Kodali, M.D, Pelham Healthcare Associates and Town of Pelham Health Officer, wants to bring awareness to the risks of the measles virus and the importance of having children vaccinated.

Dr. Kodali is urging parents, “Make sure your children have received the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. While it is best to get the vaccine as soon as your child reaches the recommended age of 12-15 months for the first round and 4-6 years for the second round, it is never too late to get your children caught up so they receive the vaccine and are fully protected. To protect your own child, as well as the other children in your community, make the decision to vaccinate your child.”

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, repeated studies have proven that the MMR vaccine is safe and effective. It is in fact one of the most effective vaccines available. If you have not been immunized against measles and come near an infected person, you have a 90 percent chance of getting measles. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the United States experienced a record number of measles cases during 2014, the greatest number of cases since measles elimination was documented in the U.S. in 2000. According to Center for Disease control, 121 cases of measles were identified in 17 states in 2015.

The majority of the people who got measles were unvaccinated. Because measles is still common in many parts of the world, travelers with measles can bring the disease into the U.S. An infected person may not show symptoms for four days -- meanwhile he or she can expose dozens of other people they encounter in daily life, at the playground, grocery store, school, and other places where children commonly are. Measles affects all organs of the body, and can cause serious and in some cases life-threatening complications in children including pneumonia and encephalitis.

Know the Symptoms

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the symptoms of measles generally appear about seven to 14 days after a person is infected. Measles typically begins with a high fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis). Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots may appear inside the mouth. Three to five days after symptoms begin, a rash breaks out. It usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike.

When measles was more common in the U.S., hundreds of children died from this virus every year. According to Dr. Kodali, “Some children cannot be vaccinated because of problems with their immune system, or because they are too young to be vaccinated. Delaying your child’s vaccines, or refusing the vaccine, leaves your child vulnerable and puts other children in the community at risk.”

For more information, contact Pelham Healthcare Associates a 603.635.2802.