



Bulletin No. 7

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PROTECT AGAINST MEASLES AND RUBELLA !!!

There have been 5,212 cases of measles reported in British Columbia during the first 16 weeks of 1986 and 849 cases of rubella. Two confirmed cases and five possible cases of congenital rubella syndrome were reported in 1985. These vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks have health officials concerned since many Alaskans plan to visit EXPO '86. EXPO '86 begins in Vancouver, B.C., on May 2, 1986. **There is no reason to avoid traveling to EXPO '86!!!** Travelers planning to visit British Columbia this spring should check their immunization record to be sure that they are protected against measles and rubella. This is also an excellent opportunity to be certain that all other vaccinations are up-to-date.

Measles vaccine is routinely recommended for all children at 15 months of age. However, when visiting an area experiencing an outbreak of measles such as Vancouver, B.C. infants as young as 6 months of age should be vaccinated against measles before leaving. **These infants will need to be revaccinated when they are 15 months old to ensure protection.** Most persons born before 1957 are likely to have been infected naturally and are protected. Young adults born in 1957 or later who were immunized with measles vaccine prior to 1968 should be reimmunized.

Measles can be a serious disease. It is often complicated by middle ear infection or pneumonia. Encephalitis occurs in approximately one of every 1,000 cases; survivors often have brain damage and mental retardation. Death occurs in two of every 10,000 measles cases.

Although rubella is a mild acute disease when compared to measles, it is important because of its ability to produce defects in the developing fetus. Congenital rubella syndrome occurs among 25 percent or more of infants born to women who acquire rubella during the first trimester of pregnancy. Fetuses infected early during pregnancy are at risk of intrauterine death, spontaneous abortion, and congenital malformations of major organ systems.

Females of child-bearing age need to be protected against rubella because of the possibility of infection during pregnancy. Females of child-bearing age should be counseled not to become pregnant for three months following a rubella vaccination. **Pregnant females should not receive a rubella vaccination.**

Anyone who develops illness with a **fever** and **rash** within a month of visiting British Columbia, particularly Vancouver and EXPO '86, should consult their physician or health department.

(Submitted by Mike Klatt, Immunization Program Coordinator, Section of Communicable Disease Control, Division of Public Health)