



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Dangerous Imports

Measles — United States, 2008

Recorded: August 19, 2008; posted: August 21, 2008

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

In 2000, transmission of measles was declared to be eliminated from the United States. Unfortunately, measles is still common in many countries around the world, including some countries in Europe. Essentially, all measles cases in the United States are now linked to imported cases. During the first seven months of 2008, 131 cases of measles have been reported to CDC. Nearly all were unvaccinated, and most were in some way linked to persons who contracted the disease in another country and then traveled to the United States.

Amy Parker is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. She's joining us today to discuss the recent increase in measles cases in the United States. Welcome to the show, Amy.

[Ms. Parker] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Amy, how does the number of cases of measles so far this year in the United States compare with previous years?

[Ms. Parker] We've seen an increase this year, with a total of 131 measles cases through July. This is in comparison to an average of 63 cases per year during previous years since 2000.

[Dr. Gaynes] Why the sudden increase in cases, Amy?

[Ms. Parker] There are large outbreaks occurring internationally in highly traveled areas, such as several European countries, and with the extensive international travel that occurs in today's world, we're seeing many cases being imported into the U.S. And often times these cases are being imported into communities where there are numerous unvaccinated persons.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is there any kind of screening process for persons coming into the United States to detect measles?

[Ms. Parker] No.

[Dr. Gaynes] So is measles vaccination universally required in our schools in the United States?

[Ms. Parker] There's a policy for school children to have two doses of measles vaccine prior to school entry, but when kids are home schooled, they're able to get around that policy and, also, several states offer exemptions.

[Dr. Gaynes] Amy, do you think there's been an increase in the number of parents opting not to have their children get the measles vaccine?

[Ms. Parker] That number is still very low. When you look at our national coverage levels, we have very, very high national vaccine coverage. And the number of parents who are opting out is a very small number.

[Dr. Gaynes] Amy, is there any way to protect children from measles besides giving them the vaccine?

[Ms. Parker] Vaccinating your child offers the best protection, and vaccination is what we recommend.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about measles?

[Ms. Parker] Listeners can go to www.cdc.gov and then search on *Measles Vaccination*.

[Dr. Gaynes] Amy, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Ms. Parker] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] That's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.