

BIKUR CHOLIM PRE-PESACH MEASLES ADVISORY

LA JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO MEASLES CRISIS

APRIL 17, 2019

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Centers for Disease Control and regional Health Departments are reporting nationwide measles outbreaks of crisis proportion. Many of these cases have been reported in Jewish communities throughout the East Coast and Midwest. Measles is one of the most contagious diseases in existence and can have a life-threatening impact on its victims.

Children infected with measles can present devastating consequences not just to themselves, but to the public at large. Tragically, we are seeing unvaccinated children and adults hospitalized; and worse yet, die from measles.

Measles generally appears about 7 – 14 days after a person is infected. It typically begins with high fever, cough, runny nose, and red/watery eyes followed by a rash that tends to start on the head and neck before spreading to the torso and extremities.

In light of the upcoming Pesach (Passover) holiday, when thousands will be traveling around the world celebrating together with families and within large groups, there is serious concern of an outbreak in Los Angeles. Bikur Cholim is closely working with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, members of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and community pediatricians on the potential impact of this national crisis in Greater Los Angeles.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Any child or adult symptomatic of measles must immediately be isolated and evaluated by a physician. Time is of the essence and a physician must be contacted before proceeding to any office or emergency department to avoid possible infection to others. Parents must ensure that all of their children's immunizations are up-to-date. Parents of unvaccinated children should immediately call their pediatrician to schedule their child to be vaccinated. Those who are uninsured and/or under-insured can contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at (213) 351-7800 or visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/> for information on how and where their child can receive free or low-cost vaccinations.

Many adults, particularly those born in 1957 or later, have also been affected by recent outbreaks. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health recommends that this group of adults contacts their physician to determine if they remain immune or if they require two doses (boosters) of the measles immunization.

WHAT BIKUR CHOLIM IS DOING

Bikur Cholim is organizing a medical conference for Jewish day school/yeshiva principals and administrators, synagogue Rabbonim, community leaders, and first responders that will include a panel of Los Angeles County Department of Public Health officials, community pediatricians, and legal professionals to provide guidance and recommendations for schools and synagogues to implement. We are also working on expanded access to childhood vaccination centers throughout Los Angeles. Details will be forthcoming.

JEWISH LAW (HALACHA)

In Judaism, issues that impact the health of individuals and the public at large are decided based on the opinions of the majority of medical experts. In cases of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), the opinion held by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Medical Association, and tens of thousands of physicians is that vaccinations must be taken as scheduled as prescribed by the Centers for Disease Control guidelines. In Jewish law there is an obligation to be vaccinated and no basis that immunizations should be avoided.