



MEASLES ALERT

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Making sure you and everyone in your family is properly immunised against measles before you travel overseas should be as important as packing your passport, NSW Health said today. Since the beginning of August, two school aged people have returned home from travel overseas with measles. Since then the infection has spread to five others.

The Acting Director of Health Protection, Dr Jeremy McAnulty said the cases were a reminder that people of all ages should ensure they are immune to measles. Measles is highly contagious and can be spread by being in the same room with someone carrying the disease. "It's a nasty infection that is largely preventable through vaccination," said Dr McAnulty. Two doses of the measles (MMR) vaccine are required to protect you against the disease.

"People who have never been vaccinated are especially at risk. People born in or before 1965 often had measles when it was a common childhood infection and they are usually immune. If you catch measles overseas you can bring it back and easily spread it."

Symptoms include high fever, tiredness, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes which can last several days before a red, blotchy rash appears. People with measles usually feel extremely unwell and miserable.

Dr McAnulty said up to a third of people with measles have complications which range from ear infections, diarrhoea to pneumonia. "Anyone with symptoms of measles should not go to school or work or out in public. You should see a doctor as soon as possible – but call ahead first so you don't infect others in the doctor's rooms," he said.

Doctors can arrange a simple blood test or take a throat swab that confirms the diagnosis.