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Paris-to-Utah traveler diagnosed with measles

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SALT LAKE CITY — A woman flying into Utah from Paris brought along an extremely contagious disease with her — the measles.

The Utah Department of Health said the unimmunized young woman arrived in Utah on July 20 on a Delta Airline flight from Paris.

She fell ill July 26 while visiting Page, Ariz. Her father, who is also unimmunized, has also fallen ill and is being tested for measles.

While here, the woman and five family members traveled to various places in the state, including Moab, Arches, Bluff and Canyonlands national parks and Monument Valley.

Anyone who has visited southeastern Utah within the past 10 days and hasn't been immunized against the measles could be at risk and should watch for symptoms, according to UDOH.

"It's a concern because measles is extremely contagious and it concerns us when we have someone come in and introduce it into our community," said Lewis Garrett, director of the Davis County Health Department.

"We have a tracking system based on the required immunization children should have before they enter school and we always have a very small number of kids who aren't getting vaccinated."

Garrett said the vaccination has done wonders in preventing the viral illness. He said since the immunization was introduced, the number of cases have plummeted.

Gwen Hadley, assistant nursing director at the Weber-Morgan Health Department, said any rash should be considered suspicious as well as a fever between 103 and 105 degrees, a runny nose and red, watery eyes.

"When I was a kid and someone got the measles, they were put in a dark room with the door closed," she said. "Measles is highly, highly contagious. It's airborne and it can have secondary side effects, which can be very serious."

Hadley said overall, about 75 percent of children have been adequately immunized by the age of 2.

Some of those complications, although rare, can include blindness, deafness, brain infection and even death, Hadley said.

Since 2003, Utah has only seen one case of measles and that was in 2005.

Once exposed, the incubation period before symptoms appear is typically 10 to 12 days, according to the UDOH. The rash begins about five to six days later, starting around the ears and hairline and spreads to the face, trunk and arms. Anyone experiencing these symptoms who was in the same area as the woman should seek immediate medical attention.

Two doses of the vaccine are recommended for children at 12 months of age and again at the age of 6. Garrett said boosters aren't generally needed but are encouraged for health care providers, international travelers, people born after 1957 and anyone with no previous history of vaccination or disease.

"The best way to prevent it is to be vaccinated," Garrett said. "And if you or your child are sick, please stay home."