

Mumps Epidemic Spreads

by Bend Weekly News Sources

A mumps outbreak that first appeared to be confined to one state has spread, and federal health officials are investigating airline travel as a potential source of exposure. All states have been advised to be on the lookout for additional cases, public health officials in the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) said today. As of Thursday, 605 possible mumps cases were reported in Iowa with additional cases reported in six neighboring states. Two of the infected persons traveled on commercial airline flights and potentially exposed other passengers.

IDPH has identified two persons who had mumps diagnosed and were potentially infectious during travel on nine different commercial flights involving two airlines during March 26--April 2, 2006. The commercial airline flights identified with a potentially infectious traveler are listed below by date, carrier, and flight number:

Northwest Airline (NWA) flights:

March 26 NWA (Mesaba) #3025 from Waterloo, Iowa to Minneapolis, Minnesota March 26 NWA #760 from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Detroit, Michigan March 27 NWA #0260 from Detroit, Michigan, to Washington, DC--Reagan National March 29 NWA #1705 from Washington, DC--Reagan National to Minneapolis, Minnesota March 29 NWA (Mesaba) #3026 from Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Waterloo, Iowa

American Airline (AA) flights:

April 2 AA #1216 from Tucson, Arizona, to Dallas, Texas (DFW) April 2 AA #3617 from DFW to Lafayette, Arkansas (Northwest Arkansas Regional [NAR]) April 2 AA #5399 from NAR to St. Louis, Missouri April 2 AA #5498 from St. Louis, Missouri, to Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Persons on these flights who have symptoms consistent with mumps within 21 days of travel should be evaluated for mumps by a health-care provider. Health-care providers should remain vigilant for mumps among persons with parotitis or other salivary gland inflammation. Cases of suspected mumps should be reported immediately to public health officials.

"We have notified doctors of this outbreak and urged them to be on the lookout for additional cases," said Mel Kohn, M.D., state epidemiologist. "It's important that they voluntarily report any suspected illnesses to their local health department." (Mumps has not been a disease that doctors are required to report to public health since 1981, when 69 cases were reported.) Mumps is a viral infection of the salivary glands that is spread by coughing or sneezing. Symptoms are fever, headache, muscle ache and swelling of the glands close to the jaw, according to Kohn. "It's also important for people to understand that mumps can sometimes develop into serious complications, including deafness, sterility and even death," Kohn said. "We seldom see cases of mumps, but this outbreak is a reminder that the disease is still out there. It underscores why keeping children current on their immunizations is so important," Kohn said. Mumps, once a common childhood disease, was all but vanquished through childhood vaccination. Incidence of cases in the U.S. began to decrease after vaccine introduction in 1967 and routine vaccination of children in 1977. Further information about the current outbreak can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm55d411a1.htm>

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