

# Man with measles visited Fresno hospital's maternity ward, Fashion Fair mall

By Barbara Anderson

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Dr. Kenneth Bird, Fresno County health officer, talks about steps residents can take to ward off possible measles infection. A man with measles was confirmed to have visited Community Regional Medical Center and Fashion Fair mall. [Related story](#) THE FRESNO BEE

- Things to know about measles
  - Anyone with measles or who suspects he or she may have measles should stay home, verify immunizations and then contact health providers by telephone for instructions. Do not take public transportation to doctors and call ahead before going to a hospital emergency department. "Don't just show up," a health official says.
  - People with questions about potential exposure can call the Fresno County Department of Public Health at (559) 600-7193.

Fresno County health officials said a man with [measles](#) may have exposed county residents to the illness, including mothers and babies in the labor and delivery area at Community Regional Medical Center.

The man, a visitor to Fresno County, was on the third and fourth floors at the downtown Fresno hospital. He was there to visit a relative in the labor and delivery area on two separate occasions between Jan. 22 and Jan. 25.

Community Regional is taking steps to contact patients who were potentially exposed, the health officials said.

The man also visited WinCo Foods (located at Kings Canyon Road and Peach Avenue) sometime between 6:30-9:30 p.m. on Jan. 25 and Fashion Fair Mall (at the Build a Bear and Disney store) from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. that same day.

Community Regional is working closely with Fresno County health workers to inform patients who came in contact with exposed areas, said Dr. Thomas Utecht, the hospital's chief medical and quality officer. "At this time we do not have an exact figure of those exposed at our location." Hospital workers are required to provide vaccination documentation or they are tested while employed, he said. "We are checking vaccination records of staff in these areas to make sure they are protected."

WinCo spokesman Michael Read said the store was notified Wednesday by Fresno County health officials about the potential exposure and has made employees aware. Fashion Fair has "taken the necessary and preventive efforts" as instructed by health officials, mall property manager Michael Wilson said.

The man did not contract measles in Fresno County. Health officials do not know where he was exposed and are still investigating, but "there could be a link to Disney," said David Luchini, assistant director of the county's Department of Public Health. [More than 70 people in California](#) have become ill with measles and 52 have been linked to an outbreak traced to Disneyland. The outbreak surfaced after visitors became ill who had been to the park between Dec. 15 and Dec. 20.

So far, measles cases in California have been reported in 11 counties, none in the central San Joaquin Valley. But on Wednesday, Dr. Kenneth Bird, health officer for Fresno County, said he won't be surprised if the county has cases of measles that will be traced back to the man's recent visit to Fresno. "We are on the lookout for future cases," he said.

Measles is extremely contagious. It is spread through the air, but an infected person does not need to sneeze or cough to spread it. The virus can be suspended in the air for two hours after an infected person has been in a space.

Most people recover from measles with home rest, but there is no cure and the disease can lead to serious complications, including pneumonia, brain damage and loss of hearing. In extreme cases, measles can be fatal — especially in small children.

Bird said immunization is the best way to stop the spread of measles, and he's hopeful that Fresno County's high immunization rate will work in its favor. The county's immunization rate for measles — about 92% — is among the highest in California, he said. The last case of measles in Fresno County was in 1994. Children are immunized at 12 to 15 months and again between 4 and 6 years of age.

Luchini said the man with measles lives in a nearby county, but not one that is in the central San Joaquin Valley. He began feeling ill while in Fresno and returned to his home and contacted the health department there. Fresno County was notified of his illness by health officials in his home county.

Bird said the man indicated he had been immunized against measles, but documentation to prove that is incomplete.

The man, in his 40s, had a mild case and recovered, Bird said. No vaccine is 100% effective, but it can lessen symptoms.

People need two measles shots to provide 99% protection, but a second immunization was not instituted in the United States until 1991. Anyone immunized for measles prior to that would have been given just one dose, Bird said, which makes it very likely that people in their 30s and 40s received only one dose. People born prior to 1957 are assumed to have immunity because typically they were exposed to measles in their youth.

With the two-dose immunization, measles has been all but eliminated in the United States, except for isolated outbreaks such as the one linked to Disney. But in years past, thousands became ill. A measles outbreak in Fresno County in 1989 sickened more than 250 people.

Measles symptoms can appear seven to 21 days after exposure. Symptoms start with a high fever, runny nose, red eyes and a rash that begins on the forehead and spreads down the body. A person can be infectious up to four days before a rash appears and up to four days afterward.

Fresno County health officials said only people who came into contact with the man who traveled to Fresno should have been exposed to measles. If they suspect they have measles, they should stay home, verify immunizations and then contact health providers by telephone for instructions.

Luchini said anyone with measles symptoms should avoid buses or other public transportation to go to a doctor, and should call ahead before going to hospital emergency departments. "Don't just show up," he said.

People with questions about potential exposure can call the [health department](#) at (559) 600-7193.

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