

No measles — so far — and high vaccination rates may be saving Fresno residents from outbreak

By Barbara Anderson



David Luchini, assistant director of Fresno County Department of Public Health, talks about the recent measles incident in Fresno.

MARK CROSSE — THE FRESNO BEE [Buy Photo](#)

Fresno may have escaped a measles outbreak from a visitor last month who potentially exposed babies and mothers at a maternity ward and shoppers at a mall.

As of Friday the county had not identified a measles case.

"I'm knocking on wood we do not have a case at this time," said David Luchini, assistant director of the [Fresno County Department of Public Health](#).

The county hopes to avoid an [outbreak such as California has been experiencing this year](#). The state has had 113 measles cases. Of those, 65 have been linked to an exposure at Disneyland in December.

Luchini said symptoms typically show up from eight to 14 days after exposure, and it's encouraging that Fresno County has not had a case, so far. But the county won't be in the clear until Monday, the end of the 21-day incubation period for symptoms — high fever and a rash — to appear.

The visitor to Fresno County was on the third and fourth floors at Community Regional Medical Center between Jan. 22 and 25 to visit a relative in the labor and delivery area. He also visited WinCo Foods (located at Kings Canyon Road and Peach Avenue) and the Build a Bear and Disney stores at Fashion Fair mall on Jan. 25.

According to the county, 527 people at Community Regional were at risk of contracting measles. Most people recover from measles, but the disease can lead to pneumonia, brain damage and other complications. In extreme cases, measles can be fatal, and children are among those at highest risk.

The Fresno County health department took precautions to protect infants: 49 babies were given immunoglobulin, a special antibody preparation that provides immediate, short-term protection against measles. The babies were too young to have vaccine protection.

The county had to order the immunoglobulin from a company in Southern California and it was driven overnight so it could be given within a recommended six days after exposure, Luchini said.

Luchini credits high immunization rates in the county and the central San Joaquin Valley for curtailing the spread of measles. The county has a 96% immunization rate for kindergarten students. The county has not had a measles case since 1994.

But determining immunization rates for older people is not easy. County workers contacted 443 of the 527 people who were potentially exposed to measles at Community Regional, and only 49 could provide proof of having received two measles shots.

Another 225 people said they had been vaccinated — but could not provide dates or verification. People need two measles shots to provide 99% protection, but a second immunization was not common until 1991, leaving many adults with only partial immunity. People born before 1957 are assumed to have had measles and have natural immunity.

Contact Barbara Anderson: banderson@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6310 or [@beehealthwriter](https://twitter.com/beehealthwriter) on Twitter.

Copyright

© 2015 www.fresnobee.com and wire service sources. All Rights Reserved. <http://www.fresnobee.com>