



Western Upper Peninsula Health Department

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TO: Media Partners

DATE: 03/07/2024

RE: Vaccine-Preventable Infections

FOR: Immediate Release

FROM: Robert Van Howe, MD, MS, MPH, Medical Director
Western Upper Peninsula Health Department

Local Residents at Increased Risk for Vaccine-Preventable Infections

Nationally there has been an increase in the number of vaccine-preventable infections. Three cases of measles have recently been reported in Michigan and there is an ongoing measles outbreak in Florida. Houghton County has among the lowest vaccination rates in the State of Michigan. With families traveling during Spring Break, the likelihood of importing vaccine-preventable infections into our community increases. Clinicians and community members need to be on the lookout for possible infections. The best way to avoid infection and protect the community is to be up to date with vaccinations. Vaccines are available through personal health care providers and the health department.

Vaccine-preventable infections include measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough, chicken pox, meningitis, pneumonia, and polio. Houghton County is at increased risk for an outbreak of one or more of these infections. Robert S. Van Howe, MD, the Medical Director of the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department notes, "The vaccination rate in Houghton County is well below what is needed to protect the community from an outbreak." Vaccine-preventable infections can spread quickly through a community with a low vaccination rate, so if one of these infections is suspected, notify your clinician or

the health department. As with any infection, Dr. Van Howe recommends, “limiting one’s exposure to others, hand-washing, and physical distancing. While these are helpful, the best protection against infection is vaccination. It will not only protect you, but it will also help protect your neighbor.”

For further information, contact the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department at 906-482-7382.

Information is also available at www.wuphd.org.

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