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**June 22, 2012**

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**Virginia Department of Health Urges Immunizations for Travelers to 2012 Olympics**

(Richmond, Va.) In just a few weeks, the world will watch as athletes from around the globe compete at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. If you are one of the millions of people who will travel to the United Kingdom (UK) to watch the Games firsthand, the Virginia Department of Health urges you to be current on your vaccinations before you go.

“Making sure that you are up-to-date on all routine vaccinations—especially measles—not only protects you and your family,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP, “it also protects your neighbors and your community when you return home.”

In 2011, 222 people in the United States were reported to have measles; seven cases were reported in Virginia. Both U.S. residents and visitors from other countries contracted measles while abroad and unknowingly brought it to the United States. In many instances, the disease then spread to individuals resulting in 17 measles outbreaks in various U.S. communities, including Virginia.

Measles is still quite common in some popular tourist destinations, including parts of Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. There is currently a large [measles outbreak](#) in Europe. There were 1,083 measles cases reported from the UK in 2011. This year, 1,279 suspected measles cases have been reported in the UK as of April 29. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges all travelers going to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games be immunized against measles.

The best protection against measles is the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine; so before departing, travelers should be sure they are fully vaccinated. Ideally, vaccination should take place at least two weeks prior to departure. If this time frame is not feasible, vaccination still should take place before leaving the United States. Most health insurance plans cover the cost of vaccines. If you don't have insurance or if your insurance does not cover vaccines for your child, free vaccine may be available at [local health departments](#) or, for persons age 18 and younger, through the [Virginia Vaccines for Children Program](#).

“In light of the ongoing measles outbreak in Europe, if you plan to go to the London Olympics, it is especially important to be up to date with your MMR vaccine before departure,” said Dr. Remley.

The CDC recommends that adolescents and adults who have not had measles or who have not been vaccinated should get two doses separated by at least 28 days. Children 12 months of age or older also should have two doses separated by at least 28 days. While the first dose of measles vaccine is traditionally administered at age 12 months, it is recommended that infants 6 to 11 months who will be travelling out of the United States receive at least 1 dose of MMR. (See CDC Measles Outbreak Travel Notice listed below for additional details regarding the routine MMR vaccine series.)

To learn more visit:

- London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/news-announcements/london-2012-olympic-and-paralympic-games.htm>
- CDC Measles Outbreak Travel Notice: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/outbreak-notice/measles.htm>
- Americans Traveling Abroad, December 20, 2011 Letter from the Commissioner: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/clinicians/pdf/122012Trave.pdf>
- MMR Vaccine Information Statement: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-mmr.pdf>
- VDH Measles Fact Sheet: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/factsheets/Measles.htm>

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