

FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE: 4/25/06

From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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With more than a thousand cases of mumps reported in the Midwest in recent months, your local health department is attempting to head off any confusion or perhaps mis-information regarding the mumps. The mumps is a viral infection which commonly affects the salivary glands. Mumps is spread through contact with infected saliva, by kissing, sharing eating utensils or cups, **or** through the air by coughing or sneezing. Symptoms normally include swelling of the glands below the ears, fever, headache and muscle aches. Additionally, mumps is often more serious in adults than in children. **It is also important to remember** that up to 20% of persons with the mumps display no symptoms at all, but are contagious for several days. As of this date (4/25/06) there have been **no confirmed cases** of the mumps in our tri-county area, however there have been a handful of cases confirmed in Michigan. There are also several cases in Michigan and in our area that are under investigation. As background, in 2004 there were 2 cases of mumps in Michigan and in 2005 there were 24 cases.

Mumps is typically prevented by the mumps vaccination (commonly referred to as MMR) that is part of the routine vaccination given to virtually all children. It is also believed that adults born before 1957 most likely had mumps during childhood due to the prevalence of the disease during that time. Those people would therefore be immune for their lifetime (you don't get it twice). This immunity, however, is not certain if they never were infected.

The health department is currently making 3 recommendations regarding the mumps. First, healthcare providers should review their own staff immunization records to assure the persons providing healthcare do not transmit the disease unknowingly. Second, that the public check their own vaccination records to be sure they have been properly vaccinated. Last, and quite possibly the most important thing you can do is to use common sense. **The public can help public health greatly by protecting yourselves from diseases like the mumps with the following simple guidelines.**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick – keep your distance, don't shake hands.
- Stay at home when you are sick – including from work, school, church and other public gatherings.
- Cover your mouth/nose when coughing or sneezing to prevent spreading germs.
- Wash your hands frequently - helps protect you and others from spreading germs
- If you are sick, drink plenty of liquids, avoid smoking, get plenty of sleep, avoid alcohol and reduce stress - (these aren't bad suggestions when you are not sick either!!)

For a fact sheet on the mumps, other disease information or links to additional information, visit our web site at www.bhsj.org or call your local Health Department office at:

Or call your local Health Department office at:

Coldwater
279-9561 x 143

Hillsdale
437-7395 x 107

Sturgis
659-4013 x 109

Three Rivers
273-2161 x 241