

NEWS / HEALTH

## Suffolk warns others may have been exposed to confirmed case of measles

Anyone who was in the BNB Bank in Hampton Bays on Saturday from 12:15 p.m. until the bank closed at 1 p.m. should call the Suffolk County Department of Health.

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Updated April 25, 2019 6:44 PM

A case of measles has been confirmed in Suffolk County, health officials said Thursday as they warned that people may have been exposed to the infected adult at a bank in Hampton Bays.

Anyone who was in the BNB Bank, 48 E. Montauk Hwy., on Saturday from 12:15 p.m. until the bank closed at 1 p.m. is being asked to contact the Suffolk County Department of Health.



A measles, mumps and rubella vaccine on a countertop at a pediatrics clinic in Greenbrae, Calif., on Feb. 6, 2015. Photo Credit: AP/Eric Risberg

Health officials have released few details about the infected person, other than to describe the individual as someone who recently arrived in the United States. The infection does not appear to be related to outbreaks in other New York communities, where the measles virus has been spreading for months.

“There are cases cropping up all over and the solution is vaccination,” said Dr. Bruce Farber, chief of infectious diseases at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, a division of Northwell Health System.

Vaccination bolsters herd immunity, the safety net that protects communities when the vast majority of people are incapable of contracting or spreading an infection, Farber said.

“Measles is extraordinarily contagious. It is one of the most contagious, if not the most contagious infectious disease,” Farber said.

He added that there are many pockets of long-standing measles infection around the world, namely in Israel and parts of Eastern Europe. However, a massive outbreak underway in Madagascar, an island nation located off the eastern coast of Africa, has killed more than 300 people in recent weeks, mostly children.

Measles is a respiratory infection caused by a virus that can reside in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person. An explosive rash is a distinguishing feature. The infection can spread via coughing and sneezing. And studies show that the virus can survive for up to two hours in the airspace where an infected person has coughed or sneezed.

The pathogen is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90 percent of the people close to that person who are not immunized also will become infected.

The last measles case in Suffolk was documented in 2017, when an infant who contracted the infection outside the U.S. was treated at Good Samaritan Hospital. The last instances of measles in Nassau were in 2013, when two cases were traced to exposures outside the country.

Suffolk's case arrives as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed Thursday that measles cases nationwide rank as the highest since the infection was declared eliminated in 2000.

Surging numbers of measles cases have been reported in 22 states, totaling 695 infections this year, CDC officials said.

The agency attributed the escalating number of cases to large clusters of measles, especially in Brooklyn and Rockland County in New York, as well in the state of Washington where another outbreak has occurred. The New York clusters are not only among the largest in the country, they are part of a sustained pattern of infection, dating to October.

"This current outbreak is deeply troubling and I call upon all health care providers to assure patients about the efficacy and safety of the measles vaccine," CDC director Robert Redfield said. "And, I encourage all Americans to adhere to CDC vaccine guidelines in order to protect themselves, their families and their communities from measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. We must work together as a nation to eliminate this disease once and for all."