

May 9, 2019

Information about Measles for Schools

The national outbreak of measles is ongoing. Since January 1, 2019 over 700 cases of measles have occurred in 22 states. Colorado has not yet been directly impacted from this outbreak as only one case has occurred here since January. However, public health is well aware of the ongoing risk of having measles introduced into our state. For some areas such as California and New York City, the outbreaks are still not under control. Most measles cases this year have occurred in unvaccinated persons and outbreaks are being sustained in unvaccinated communities.

The national outbreak is of great concern and represents the highest number of cases reported in the U.S. since measles was declared eliminated in 2000. Vaccination rates of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine are low enough in many schools and child care centers in Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties to potentially sustain an outbreak in Colorado. We are contacting school district and individual school leadership to provide information to prevent a measles outbreak.

How does measles spread?

Measles symptoms generally begin with a high fever; runny nose; cough; and red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis). Within a few days after symptoms begin, the classic red blotchy rash appears, starting at the hairline and spreading down the body. In serious cases, measles can cause pneumonia, brain infection, or hospitalization.

Measles is one of the most contagious infections. The disease spreads very easily when a sick person talks, coughs, or sneezes which releases the virus into the air. The measles virus stays contagious in the air or on surfaces for up to two hours. People who have **not** received the MMR vaccine can become sick when they breathe in the virus or touch their eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a contaminated surface. Up to 90% of people who are exposed and not protected by MMR vaccination will get sick.

The close environment in schools or child care centers or in families' homes are conducive to rapidly spreading measles. Now is the time to take steps to prevent the spread of measles.

Recommendations for school district and schools:

1. Stay up-to-date regarding your school's student and staff MMR vaccination rates.
2. Share information about measles with your families and staff. Attached is a helpful CDC document to disseminate or please share this letter. Even though the school year is almost over, this information remains timely and relevant for summer activities and travel.
3. Students in child care, kindergarten, and elementary/middle/high school are recommended to have age-appropriate doses of MMR vaccine (i.e., one or two doses depending on age).
4. Adults 18 years or older who have never been vaccinated with MMR should receive at least one dose. Some high risk groups (such as college students, international travelers, and health care workers) should receive two doses. People born before 1957 are considered immune because measles infection was so common during that time.
5. If a student or staff member is suspected or confirmed to have measles, please contact Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) immediately by calling 303-220-9200 and asking for someone in Communicable Disease. We will provide guidance and next steps to prevent the spread of the disease. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) can also be contacted at 303-692-2700 (after hours 303-370-9395).

Staying out of school:

Any student or staff member who develops measles will be required to stay home through four days after the measles rash develops. The person can no longer spread the virus to others after this time.

Any student or staff member who has been exposed to someone with measles and cannot provide documentation of MMR vaccination or immunity to measles will likely be required to stay at home and away from school for a minimum of 21 days or even longer if there is an ongoing outbreak at the school.

For more information about measles, visit www.cdc.gov/measles. For more information about where to get immunizations, visit TCHD's website (<http://www.tchd.org/356/immunizations>). To see your school's vaccination rates visit CDPHE's immunization website (<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/school-and-child-care-immunization-data>).

For questions about this public health notice, please call Tri-County Health Department at 303-220-9200.

Top 4 Things Parents Need to Know about Measles

You may be hearing a lot about measles lately, and all of this news on TV, social media, Internet, newspapers and magazines may leave you wondering what you as a parent really need to know about this disease. CDC has put together a list of the most important facts about measles for parents like you.

1

Measles can be serious.

Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clears up in a few days, but measles can cause serious health complications, especially in children younger than 5 years of age. There is no way to tell in advance the severity of the symptoms your child will experience.

- About 1 in 4 people in the U.S. who get measles will be hospitalized.
- 1 out of every 1,000 people with measles will develop brain swelling, which could lead to brain damage.
- 1 or 2 out of 1,000 people with measles will die, even with the best care.

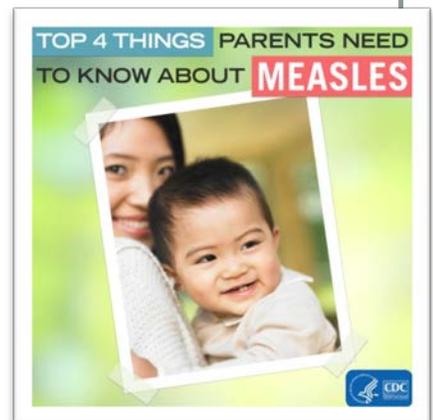
Some of the more common measles symptoms include:

- Fever
- Rash
- Runny nose
- Red eyes

2

Measles is very contagious.

Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is so contagious that if one person has it, 9 out of 10 people around him or her will also become infected if they are not protected. Your child can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, even up to two hours after that person has left. An infected person can spread measles to others even before knowing he/she has the disease—from four days before developing the measles rash through four days afterward.



3

Your child can still get measles in United States.

Measles was declared eliminated from the U.S. in 2000 thanks to a highly effective vaccination program. Eliminated means that the disease is no longer constantly present in this country. However, measles is still common in many parts of the world, including some countries in Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. Worldwide, an estimated 20 million people get measles and 146,000 people, mostly children, die from the disease each year.

Even if your family does not travel internationally, you could come into contact with measles anywhere in your community. Every year, measles is brought into the United States by unvaccinated travelers (Americans or foreign visitors) who get measles while they are in other countries. Anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk.

4

You have the power to protect your child against measles with a safe and effective vaccine.

The best protection against measles is measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR vaccine provides long-lasting protection against all strains of measles. Your child needs two doses of MMR vaccine for best protection:

- The first dose at 12 through 15 months of age
- The second dose 4 through 6 years of age

If your family is traveling overseas, the vaccine recommendations are a little different:

- If your baby is 6 through 11 months old, he or she should receive 1 dose of MMR vaccine before leaving.
- If your child is 12 months of age or older, he or she will need 2 doses of MMR vaccine (separated by at least 28 days) before departure.

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National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

Division of Viral Diseases

