

Health issue of concern: Measles**Updated: 4/11/25**

There has been a rapid increase in measles (rubeola) cases across the United States. 712 cases have been reported across multiple states (Centers for Disease Control, 2025). Most of these cases have been in Texas. As of April 5, 2025, the Texas Department of State Health Services has reported 505 identified cases of measles since late January, including two school-age child fatalities (Texas Health & Human Services, 2025). In comparison, there were only 285 total cases in the U.S. in all of 2024.

Measles is a highly contagious disease that typically begins with symptoms such as high fever, cough, runny nose, red/watery eyes, tiny white spots inside the mouth, and a rash. In some cases, severe complications, such as pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and even death can occur, especially in young children and immunocompromised individuals. The virus lives in the nose and throat of an infected person, meaning it will spread through coughing and sneezing. It can remain in the air or on surfaces for up to two hours, making disinfecting shared spaces critical to reducing transmission.

Unvaccinated individuals, both children and adults, are at risk of contracting measles. The most effective way to protect yourself and those around you is to get the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. This vaccine is typically given in two doses: the first at 12-15 months of age and the second at 4-6 years. However, older children and adults without documented immunity are strongly encouraged to receive the vaccine. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles, while one dose is about 93% effective. If you are exposed to measles, and not immune, receiving the MMR vaccine within 72 hours can provide some protection or may lessen the severity of the illness.

If you are unsure about your or a family member's vaccination status, check your records or consult with a healthcare provider. Wisconsin residents can view their immunization history through the Wisconsin Immunization Registry (WIR) at www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/immunization/registry. You will need your first name, last name, date of birth, and either your social security number, Medicaid ID, or Health Care Member ID.

Infected individuals should stay home and isolate. They may only return to normal activities if they meet the following criteria:

- At least four days have passed since the rash appeared, and
- They are fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication and
- Symptoms are improving.

Students who are not vaccinated will be excluded from attending school during a measles outbreak until the outbreak has ended or they receive the post-exposure MMR vaccination within 72 hours of being exposed. Unvaccinated children who were excluded from school or other events may return after the incubation period, which is typically 21 days, or if they receive post-exposure vaccination as recommended by health authorities.

To reduce the spread of illness, wash hands often, cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, and stay home when sick. It is important to ensure your vaccinations are up to date, especially before traveling.

For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>

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