

# Health Advisory: Measles (Rubeola)

Georgia Department of Public Health Requests Reports of Suspect Measles Cases

## Action Steps:

**Local health departments:** *Please forward to hospitals and clinics in your jurisdiction.*

**Hospitals and clinics:** *Please distribute to infectious disease doctors, infection preventionists, emergency department physicians, intensive care physicians, neurologists, radiologists, primary care providers, and pediatricians.*

## Summary

As of Tuesday, December 19, 2022 a large measles outbreak in Columbus Ohio has now affected 81 children, most of them who are unvaccinated (having zero doses of MMR vaccine) or under-vaccinated (having had only one dose of a two-dose recommended MMR vaccine). Of those cases more than half are among kids between 1 and 2 years of age, and more than a quarter of the patients required hospitalization. There have been no reported deaths.

In the United States, as of December 15, 106 measles cases in five states have been reported this year. That number is a significant increase from the 49 cases reported in 2021 and 13 cases reported in 2020, yet down considerably from the 1,274 reported in 2019 when several large outbreaks occurred in the United States.

There are currently no measles cases reported in Georgia. Measles anywhere in the United States is a threat, as the virus can quickly spread by infected individuals to multiple communities and across international borders. The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) urges healthcare providers to maintain heightened awareness for measles, especially in unvaccinated patients that present with a febrile rash illness and clinically compatible symptoms (cough, coryza, and/or conjunctivitis) who have recently traveled to international or domestic destinations. Isolate suspect measles patients and immediately report cases to DPH to ensure a prompt public health response.

## Clinical Presentation

Measles is one of the most highly contagious illnesses and is spread primarily person-to-person via aerosolized droplets. The incubation period is typically 10 to 12 days but can range from 4 to 21 days. Measles typically begins with a prodrome of stepwise increasing fever (often as high as 104-105° F) accompanied by cough, coryza, and/or conjunctivitis. Koplik spots (tiny red spots with bluish-white centers on the buccal mucosa), which are diagnostic for measles, may appear 2-3 days before the rash and fade 1-2 days later. As fever peaks on day 4-5, a maculopapular rash typically appears on the face along the hairline and behind the ears, and then progresses downward to the chest, back, and extremities. Within 4-5 days, the rash fades in the same order that it appeared.

## **Reporting**

Measles is a notifiable disease and suspect cases should be reported to the Georgia Department of Public Health (O.C.G.A. §31-12-2) immediately. Call your local District Health Office or the DPH Acute Disease Epidemiology Section at 404-657-2588 during business hours Monday through Friday, or 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) after-hours on evenings and weekends. Do not await laboratory results before reporting.

## **Laboratory Testing**

The preferred method for confirming measles is by reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction testing (RT-PCR). Collection of a throat swab (or nasopharyngeal swab) and urine sample for PCR testing is recommended. Measles may also be laboratory confirmed by the presence of measles-specific IgM antibody or a significant rise in measles-specific IgG antibody titer between acute-and convalescent-phase serum specimens. Collect serum, throat, and urine specimens simultaneously for best results (note: suspect patients should be **isolated** immediately, see **Actions** below). Detailed specimen collection and shipping guidelines are available at the DPH measles website, and DPH epidemiologists will facilitate testing at the time of notification.

To coordinate specimen collection and laboratory submission, call your District Health Office or the DPH Acute Disease Epidemiology Section at 404-657-2588 during business hours Monday through Friday, or 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) afterhours on evenings and weekends. **Please do not send specimens directly to the Georgia Public Health Laboratory (GPHL) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) without prior authorization.**

## **Vaccination**

Measles-containing vaccine (MMR) remains the most effective prevention against disease. Ensure that patients are up to date on their MMR vaccine. Vaccination is recommended for children at 12 to 15 months of age with a second dose at 4 to 6 years of age. Documentation of two MMR vaccinations or proof of immunity to measles is required to attend school in Georgia.

### **Actions Requested of Healthcare Providers:**

- Consider measles in persons with febrile rash illness and clinically compatible symptoms (cough, coryza, and/or conjunctivitis) and a history of recent international or domestic travel, exposure to international travelers, or exposure to a possible measles case.
- **Isolate persons with suspect measles IMMEDIATELY (negative pressure room, if available). Patients should be managed in a manner that prevents disease spread in the healthcare setting**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/isolation-guidelines-H.pdf>
- Obtain appropriate clinical specimens. Laboratory testing for measles is required for confirmation. This includes throat swabs and urine for measles PCR and culture, and blood for serology testing (see Laboratory Testing section above)

- Report suspect cases of measles **IMMEDIATELY** by calling your local District Health Office or the DPH Acute Disease Epidemiology Section at 404-657-2588 during business hours Monday through Friday, or 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584) after-hours on evenings and weekends.
- Ensure patients are up to date on their vaccinations according to CDC's recommended schedules for children and adults.

**Georgia DPH Contact Information**

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