



Increase in measles cases calls for increased vaccination efforts by New Jersey providers, especially prior to travel

Date: March 18, 2024

Public Health Message Type: Alert Advisory Update Information

Intended Audience: All public health partners Healthcare providers Infection preventionists
 Local health departments Schools/childcare centers ACOs
 Animal health professionals Other

Background:

As we enter the spring and summer travel season, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) Communicable Disease Service would like to remind clinicians to ensure their patients are up to date on all vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Following the [schedule](#) recommended by the ACIP ensures communities will be optimally protected against all vaccine-preventable diseases. Among New Jersey kindergartners, [vaccination coverage](#) has decreased from 96.0% during the 2019–2020 school year to 94.3% in the 2022–2023 school year. Effective and safe vaccines against several infectious diseases have long been available worldwide, however the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases has been rising in recent years.

Of particular concern, measles outbreaks are currently occurring in every region of the world. Several countries around the world are experiencing large [measles outbreaks](#), and other places are seeing an increase in measles cases, such as [England](#) and [Europe](#). Measles cases in the United States often originate from unvaccinated or under-vaccinated U.S. residents who travel internationally and then transmit the disease to people in the U.S. who are not vaccinated against measles.

From January 1 to March 14, 2024, a total of 58 measles cases have been [reported](#) by 17 U.S. jurisdictions: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey (1 confirmed case in 2024), New York City, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington. Among these 58 cases, 54 (93%) were linked to international travel. In 2024, seven outbreaks have occurred so far this year in the U.S., including in [Philadelphia](#), Florida, and a new arrivals shelter in [Chicago](#). Outbreaks of measles can happen in areas where people may be unvaccinated or under-vaccinated with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR). Mumps and rubella can also both be acquired internationally and imported into the U.S.

A number of holidays and events, such as Spring Break, Easter, and Passover will occur in the coming weeks. People may travel to resorts, hotels, or take cruises for the holiday and may encounter international travelers. In addition, many other social events and large gatherings may be occurring in the next several months such as graduations and weddings, all of which provide opportunities for measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases to spread.

We have a collective responsibility to protect the health and well-being of our communities by ensuring that every individual is up to date with their immunizations.

Recommendations:

- Healthcare providers should ensure that they and their staff are up to date on all recommended vaccines [including MMR](#). Ensure that all staff are trained to recognize measles and to immediately institute [infection prevention practices](#) for clinically compatible illnesses.
- Use every opportunity to assess for immunizations to ensure all patients are on track with their routine immunizations.
 - Follow the routine recommended schedule for [MMR](#) and all other [recommended vaccines](#).
- Inquire with patients about upcoming travel plans, as it is especially important for patients to be [protected](#) prior to international travel, especially with [MMR vaccine](#).
 - Ensure that your patients 6 months of age or older who will be traveling internationally are protected against measles.
 - Children who will be traveling should get an early dose at 6 through 11 months; at 12 months of age or older should get first dose immediately.
 - Teens and adults who do not have record of immunization history should be given a dose of MMR.
 - Two doses of MMR vaccine provide 97% protection against measles, so follow up to complete the second dose of the series. It also protects against mumps and rubella, both of which can be acquired internationally.

Reminders:

- NJ Communicable Disease reporting requirements are available [here](#).
 - Cases should be reported to the local health department where the patient resides. If you are unsure which local health department should be contacted, use the [locator tool](#).
- Healthcare providers should remain vigilant and consider [measles](#) in patients with a febrile rash illness lasting three days or more, a fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher, and clinically compatible symptoms (cough, coryza and/or conjunctivitis), particularly if the patient was potentially exposed to a case of measles or has recently traveled [internationally](#) or to an area with an on-going measles.
 - Promptly isolate patients with suspected measles to avoid disease spread.
 - Ask patients about recent international or domestic travel or visitors, contact with travelers or other possible exposures, vaccination status, and [detailed history](#) of present illness including symptoms, symptom onset dates and rash progression.
 - Immediately report the suspect measles case to the local health department where the patient resides.
 - Obtain appropriate [viral specimens](#) for testing from patients with suspected measles.
 - Providers should [implement measles prevention measures](#) by ensuring they and their staff are up-to-date with immunizations, use appropriate precautions, and have access to and are trained to use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when interacting with patients.
 - For additional information and resources on measles please visit the [New Jersey Department of Health's measles website](#) or [CDC's measles website](#).

Additional resources:

- [CDC measles information for healthcare providers](#)
- [Measles rash images on different skin tones \(from Philadelphia Department of Public Health\)](#)
- [CDC Vaccines and Immunizations](#)
- [CDC Vaccine Recommendations and Guidelines of the ACIP](#)
- [New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Preventable Disease Program, Immunization Requirements](#)