



# Health Alert Network Message 18-02: 2018 Measles Case Identified

**Origination Date:**

April 9, 2018

**Revision Dates (list all revision dates):**

## Measles Health Alert

The Louisiana Department of Health has issued a measles health alert and is urging immunization against this highly contagious illness. State health officials are asking health care providers to be on alert for potential exposures and patients with measles symptoms.

The Louisiana Department of Health has identified a laboratory-confirmed case of measles in a recent traveler from Europe to New Orleans arriving in New Orleans on Thursday, April 5th. The patient presented with cough, congestion, fever and rash, and the diagnosis was confirmed by PCR (identification of viral RNA).

Given this case, and a recent increase in measles internationally, all healthcare providers are requested to consider measles in the initial differential diagnosis of patients with compatible symptoms (febrile rash illness), particularly those who have traveled abroad or come into contact with a known measles case and are unvaccinated. Measles is characterized by a prodrome of fever (as high as 105°F) and malaise, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis, followed by a maculopapular rash.

If you suspect a patient has measles:

1. Immediately report any suspected cases to the Louisiana Office of Public Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology Hotline at 800-256-2748 to coordinate testing through the OPH Laboratory.
2. Provide education on contact precautions (washing hands, avoiding touching infected surfaces or objects) and droplet precautions (respiratory etiquette).
3. If the patient is hospitalized, airborne precautions are indicated (negative pressure room and N95 mask with proper seal).

Measles is a highly contagious virus found in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person. It takes approximately 7-14 days from time of exposure to start to exhibit symptoms. It can spread to others through respiratory droplets and droplet nuclei released when coughing, sneezing speaking. Also, measles virus can remain for up to two hours in an airspace where the infected person was present. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch infected surfaces, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.

Infected individuals can spread measles to others from four days before through four days after the rash appears.

Measles can be serious in all age groups. However, children younger than 5 years of age and adults older than 20 years of age are more likely to suffer from measles complications.

## Infographic

Common measles complications include ear infections and diarrhea.

- Ear infections occur in about one out of every 10 children with measles and can result in permanent hearing loss.

- Diarrhea is reported in less than one out of 10 people with measles.

Some people may suffer from severe complications, such as pneumonia (infection of the lungs) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). They may need to be hospitalized and could die.

- As many as one out of every 20 children with measles gets pneumonia, the most common cause of death from measles in young children.

- About one child out of every 1,000 who get measles will develop encephalitis (swelling of the brain) that can lead to convulsions and can leave the child deaf or with intellectual disability.

- For every 1,000 children who get measles, one or two will die from it.

Measles may cause pregnant woman to give birth prematurely or have a low-birth-weight baby.

From January 1 to March 30, 2018, 34 people from 11 states (Arkansas, California, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas) were reported to have measles.

In 2017, 118 people from 15 states and the District of Columbia were reported to have measles. In 2016, 86 people from 19 states were reported to have measles. In 2015, 188 people from 24 states and the District of Columbia were reported to have measles. In 2014, the United States experienced a record number of measles cases, with 667 cases from 27 states reported to CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD); this is the greatest number of cases since measles elimination was documented in the U.S. in 2000.

The majority of people who got measles were unvaccinated.

Measles is still common in many parts of the world including some countries in Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa.

Travelers with measles continue to bring the disease into the U.S.

Measles can spread when it reaches a community in the U.S. where groups of people are unvaccinated.

The measles vaccine is very effective. One dose of measles vaccine is about 93% effective at preventing measles if exposed to the virus. Two doses are about 97% effective.

That means that only three out of 100 people who get two doses of measles vaccine will still get measles if exposed to the virus. In addition, fully vaccinated people who get measles are much more likely to have a milder illness, and they are also less likely to spread the disease to other people, including people who can't get vaccinated because they are too young or have weakened immune systems.

Providers should also take appropriate infection control precautions and immediately report any suspected measles cases to the Louisiana Office of Public Health Infectious

Disease Epidemiology Hotline at  
800-256-2748.

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