

## Measles

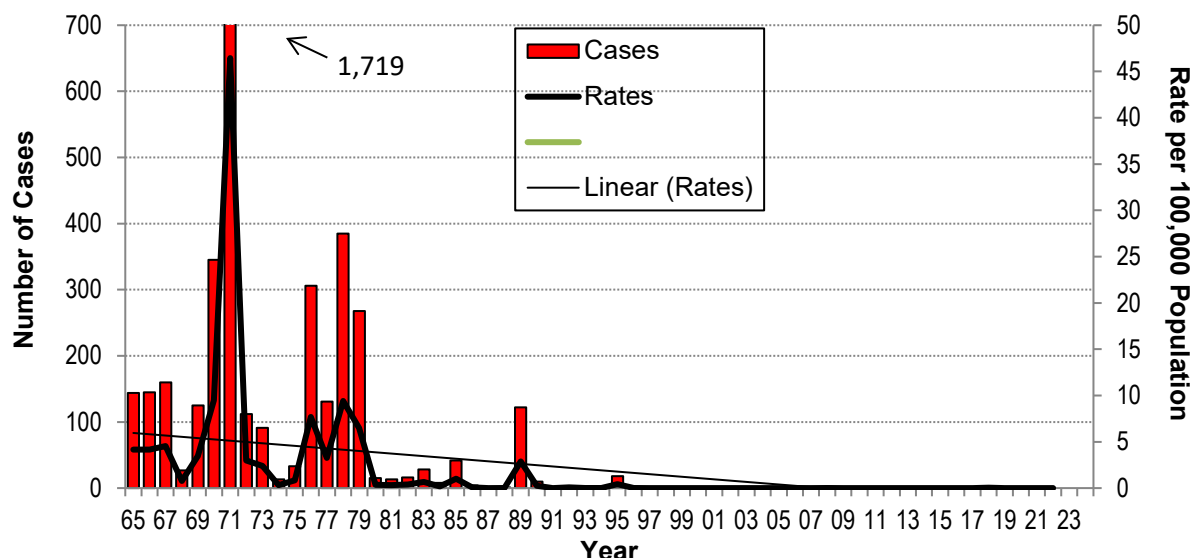
*Measles is a Class A Disease and must be reported to the state within 24 hours by calling the phone number listed on the website. **Report by telephone immediately** all cases, suspected cases, or positive laboratory results.*

Measles (Rubeola) is an acute, highly contagious, respiratory illness caused by the measles virus. Measles spreads through direct contact with infectious droplets and, less commonly, through airborne transmission.

In the pre-vaccine era, measles was an epidemic disease; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that three to four million people in the United States were infected each year, of whom 400 to 500 died, 48,000 were hospitalized and another 1,000 developed chronic disability from measles encephalitis. Most cases occurred in preschool and young school-age children. Practically all children became infected by five years of age. Measles epidemics occurred every two to five years and lasted two to three months during the early spring. In addition to epidemics, a few cases occurred every week throughout the inter-epidemic period.

The first measles vaccine was introduced in 1965, and by 1967, it was being administered on a massive scale. The last major surge of measles cases in the U.S. occurred in 1971. An improved version of the vaccine replaced the original in 1979. By 1981, Louisiana saw fewer than 20 reported cases each year. In 1989, there was a national measles epidemic and the number of cases in Louisiana rose to 122. Since 1990, intensified immunization efforts have brought the reported cases down to fewer than ten cases per year, with the exception of a small outbreak of 15 cases in 1995 (Figure 1). Thanks to a successful U.S. vaccination program, measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, meaning endemic transmission had been interrupted.

Figure 1: Measles cases and incidence rates - Louisiana, 1965-2023



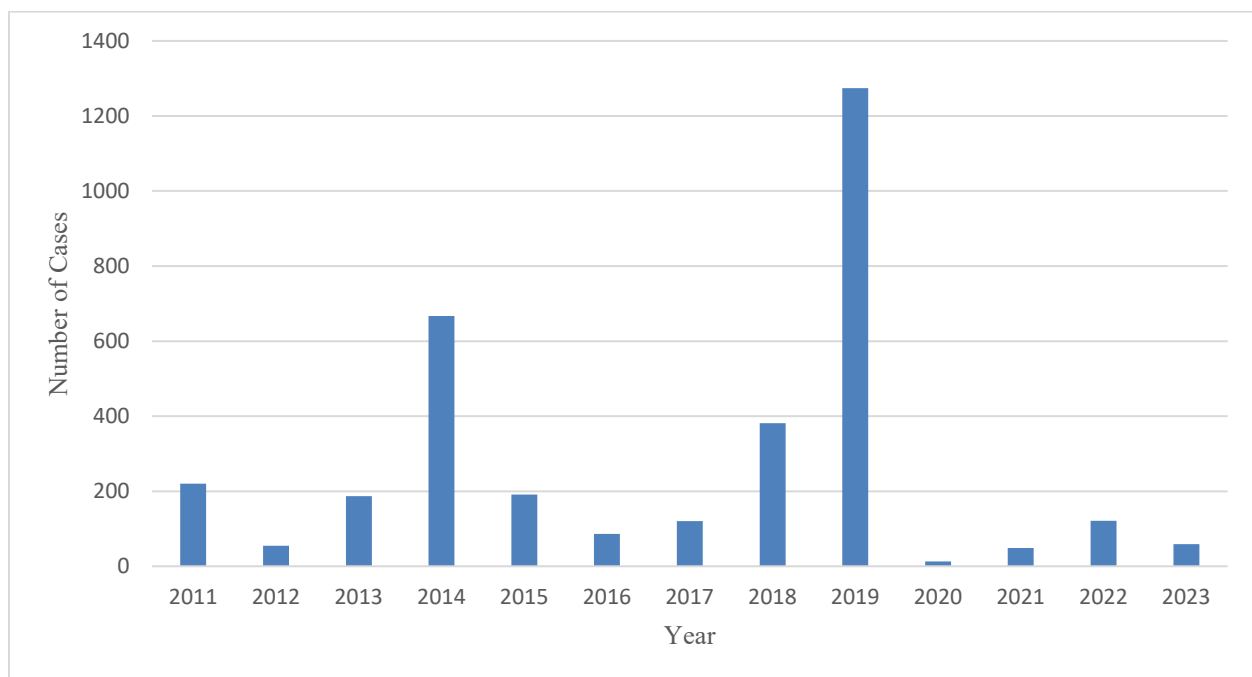
The last cases of measles in Louisiana were reported in 2018, both were imported from other countries. Prior to that, the last reported case was in 2008. Although eliminated in the U.S. and the World Health Organization American Region, 20 million cases of measles and 197,000 deaths occur each year worldwide. These recent cases show that measles can still be brought into the United States from other countries and cause outbreaks if population vaccination does not stay high enough.

In 2014, 667 cases of measles were reported from 27 U.S. states, the greatest number of cases reported since the disease was officially documented as eliminated in 2000. Most of these cases were either imported from areas of the world where transmission is still common, or occurred in unvaccinated U.S. residents.

In 2015, an outbreak of measles once again occurred in the United States. This outbreak is thought to have originated in a popular theme park in southern California, likely from a traveler who had been infected outside of the country, but no source was ever identified. One hundred forty seven (147) cases were identified in seven U.S. states, Canada, and Mexico. Just under 50% of the cases were found to be unvaccinated, while an additional 38% were characterized as unsure of vaccination status. Also in 2015, the first U.S. death from measles since 2003 was reported to the CDC. Although the deceased had been vaccinated appropriately, this person was learned to have been on immune suppressing medications at the time of infection.

In 2019, CDC reported the greatest number of cases reported in the U.S. since 1992 with the majority of cases occurring in those who were not vaccinated against measles.

Figure 2: Measles Cases Reported - United States, 2011-2023



<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/>