

HEALTH ALERT

MEASLES CAN BE PREVENTED

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is sending out this alert to provide information on the recent increase in the number of individuals contracting measles. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

“From January 1 to May 3, 2019, 764 individual cases of measles have been confirmed in 23 states. This is the greatest number of cases reported in the U.S. since 1994 and since measles was declared eliminated in 2000.”

Pennsylvania is among the states confirming new cases of measles.

What is Measles:

Measles is a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person.

Symptoms of a Measle Infection:

The symptoms of measles generally appear about 7 to 14 days after a person is infected. The measles rash usually starts first as flat red spots on the face. These spots may increase in number and connect spreading down the neck and body. Small raised bumps may form on the flat red spots.

Measles symptoms typically include:

- high fever,
- cough,
- runny nose (coryza),
- red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- rash breaks out 3-5 days after symptoms begin.

Are Measles Serious?

Measles can be serious at all ages, but children less than 5 and adults over 20 are more likely to have complications. Complications include:

- Ear infection that can result in permanent hearing loss
- Diarrhea requiring hospitalization
- Pneumonia – this is the most common cause of death in children
- Swelling of the brain- that may lead to brain damage
- Pregnant women may have their babies early and the baby’s weight may be low.
- Of every 1,000 people who get measles 1-2 of them will die.

How do Measles Spread to Other People?

- Infected people can spread measles to others from 4 days before through 4 days after the rash appears.
- It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing.
- When someone sneezes or coughs the virus can live for up to 2 hours in the air.
- If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the infected surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected.
- Up to 90% of the people close to an infected person who have not been vaccinated against measles will also become infected.

Can Measles be Prevented?

Receiving the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination can prevent measles. See your health care provider for more information related to the measles vaccination.

The CDC, American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend children receive all vaccines according to the recommended schedule.

Resources:

1. About Measles (CDC Website): <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>
2. Measles: It Isn’t Just a Little Rash Infographic (CDC Website): <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/parent-infographic.html>
3. PA Department of Health – Measles Fact Sheet (pdf): <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Measles%20.pdf>