

Measles Watch on Campus

The United States is currently experiencing a large, multi-state outbreak of measles linked to an amusement park in California. The outbreak likely started from a traveler who became infected overseas with measles, then visited the amusement park while infectious, but as yet no source has been identified.

On January 23, 2015, the CDC issued a [Health Advisory](http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00376.asp) (<http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00376.asp>) to notify public health departments and healthcare facilities about this multi-state outbreak and to provide guidance for healthcare providers nationwide. To summarize:

Measles is a highly contagious, acute viral illness. It begins with a prodrome of fever, cough, runny nose, and pink eye lasting 2-4 days prior to rash onset. Measles can cause severe health complications, including pneumonia, encephalitis, and death. The incubation period for measles from exposure to fever is usually about 10 days (range, 7 to 12 days) and from exposure to rash onset is usually 14 days (range, 7 to 21 days). Measles is transmitted by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing; infected people are contagious from 4 days before their rash starts through 4 days afterwards. After an infected person leaves a location, the virus remains viable for up to 2 hours on surfaces and in the air.

Measles can be prevented with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Due to the widespread use of the measles vaccine, measles was declared eliminated from the US (ie: no more cases originating from inside the US) in 2000. In other countries however, measles is still common. Worldwide, an estimated 20 million people get measles and 146,000 people die from the disease each year. The virus is highly contagious and can spread rapidly in areas where people are not vaccinated.

Vaccine Recommendations:

Children

The CDC recommends all children get two doses of MMR vaccine. The first dose should be given at 12 through 15 months of age, and the second dose at 4 through 6 years of age. Children can receive the second dose earlier as long as it is at least 28

days after the first dose. Children who are traveling to high risk countries may get vaccinated as early as six months of age for extra protection.

Students at post-high school educational institutions

Students at post-high school educational institutions who do not have [evidence of immunity \(http://www.cdc.gov/measles/hcp/index.html#immunity\)](http://www.cdc.gov/measles/hcp/index.html#immunity) against measles need two doses of MMR vaccine, separated by at least 28 days.

Adults

Adults who do not have [evidence of immunity \(http://www.cdc.gov/measles/hcp/index.html#immunity\)](http://www.cdc.gov/measles/hcp/index.html#immunity) against measles should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine.

Recommendations for suspected illness:

If you are experiencing an illness which includes fever and a rash, especially if you have recently traveled abroad or been exposed to a person with similar symptoms, stay home and call your health care provider for an appointment. Do not go to class or work or attend any social activities until you have been evaluated and are cleared to do so.

There is no effective treatment for measles other than supportive care. Be on watch. Tell your friends. Most infants less than 12 months of age have not been vaccinated yet, and many college students have young children. The classmate sitting next to you could have an immune suppressive illness putting them at higher risk of death from measles, so your responsible behavior could save lives. If you have concerns or questions about measles, call a Student Health Services health care provider at 482-5464.