



Measles Outbreak in Ocean County: What You Need to Know! January 16, 2019

OVERVIEW

Between October 2018 and January 2019, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) and local health officials worked together to investigate an outbreak of measles. A total of 33 outbreak-associated cases were identified, including 30 confirmed cases in Ocean County residents and 3 cases in one Passaic County household that had a direct epidemiologic link to the outbreak community. As of January 16, two incubation periods (a total of 42 days) have passed from the last day the last known case was infectious. Because no new cases have been identified during this period, the New Jersey outbreak is being considered over.

The NJDOH's priority is to protect the health of children, adolescents, and adults, and to reduce the occurrence of vaccine-preventable diseases. Therefore, the NJDOH continues to stress basic infection prevention activities such as covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, cleaning your hands, and ensuring you're up to date with vaccinations. Since outbreaks are still ongoing in parts of New York and in other countries, individuals should continue to look out for signs and symptoms of measles. Individuals who are ill should not attend school or work to prevent the spread of disease to others.

For more information, visit the NJDOH measles page:
<https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/measles.shtml>

MAIN MESSAGES

- 1. NJDOH and local health officials consider the measles outbreak in Ocean County to be over, but still encourage individuals to practice healthy habits and be aware of signs and symptoms of the disease.**
- 2. Measles is easily spread among others.**
 - Measles can spread through coughing and sneezing.
 - It can live in the air for up to two hours.
 - Symptoms include fever, rash, runny nose, loss of appetite, and "pink eye".
 - Measles can spread **BEFORE** people realize they have measles. People can spread the disease to others four days before they develop the measles rash.
- 3. Get vaccinated to protect yourself and others.**
 - Measles vaccine is very effective and is the best way to prevent the disease.
 - Measles vaccine is safe.
 - Make sure you are vaccinated before traveling internationally.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THOSE LINKED TO THE OUTBREAK COMMUNITY AND/OR TRAVELING INTERNATIONALLY



- If you think you might have been exposed, **CALL** your health care provider **BEFORE** visiting a health care facility to discuss your exposure and risk of developing illness. Special arrangements can be made to prevent exposure to other patients and medical office staff.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms of measles: fever, rash, runny nose, cough, loss of appetite, and “pink eye”.
- Determine if you are immune to measles based on your vaccination record and your medical history. If you are not immune to measles, the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine given within 72 hours from the first exposure may help reduce your risk of developing measles. A medicine called immune globulin could also be given to some people after exposure. Check with your doctor to discuss which option is best for you. Public health authorities will determine when it is appropriate for exposed individuals to return to school, work, and public settings.
- A very small number of people who received 2 doses of MMR will still develop measles after exposure. If you have been exposed to measles or live in an area where there is an outbreak of measles, you should still be alert for signs and symptoms of measles.
- If you are traveling internationally, talk to your health care provider about getting vaccinated **BEFORE** you leave:
 - Infants 6 through 11 months of age should receive one dose of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine. Infants who get one dose of MMR vaccine before their first birthday should get two more doses (one dose at 12 through 15 months of age and another dose separated by at least 28 days).
 - Children 1 year and older should receive two doses of MMR vaccine, separated by at least 28 days.
 - Teenagers and adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get two doses of MMR vaccine separated by at least 28 days.

**CALL BEFORE
VISITING A
HEALTH CARE
FACILITY**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS



- Look for signs and symptoms of measles among students and staff.
- Check immunization records and be able to quickly identify any students and staff who do not have proof of immunity to measles. Schools should be able to identify children who are unimmunized including those with religious or medical exemptions. In order to prevent disruptions, schools should also assess staff for proof of immunity in advance of an exposure.
- Encourage healthy habits among students and staff: get vaccinated, wash your hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes, avoid sharing water bottles or items contaminated by saliva, and stay home when sick.

All suspect and confirmed cases of measles must be immediately reported to the local health department where the student/staff member resides. Contact information is available at localhealth.nj.gov (N.J.A.C. 8:57-1).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MEASLES EXPOSURES AND OUTBREAK INFORMATION

Why is the measles outbreak in Ocean County considered to be over?

The NJDOH considers the NJ measles outbreak to be over, as of January 16, since two full incubation periods (a total of 42 days) have passed from the last day the last known case would have been infectious (contagious or able to spread infection). However, since outbreaks are still ongoing in parts of New York and in other countries, individuals should continue to look out for signs and symptoms of measles as there still might be undiagnosed or unreported cases within the community.

An incubation period is the time between being exposed to an infection and the appearance of the first symptoms. A person who has measles is infectious four days before through four days after they get a rash. So, if a person was exposed to a case of measles on that fourth day of rash, he/she would be expected to develop symptoms within 21 days (one incubation period). The NJDOH waits two incubations periods (42 days) without any additional cases before declaring an outbreak over. The Department uses this extended time frame to help make sure we aren't missing any additional cases.

I don't have a doctor or insurance. Where do I go to seek medical care?

You may visit a Federally Qualified Health Care Center (FQHC) in your area. For a list of locations, please visit: <http://web.doh.state.nj.us/apps2/fhs/cphc/cphcSearch.aspx>. Please remember to **CALL** the FQHC **BEFORE** visiting so that special arrangements can be made to prevent exposure to other patients and medical office staff.

How do I know if I am immune to measles?

Your health care provider is the best person to determine if you are immune to measles based on your vaccination record and your medical history.

How can I locate my immunization records?

Contact your health care provider regarding your immunization history. Schools and colleges may also have records of your immunizations. If you cannot locate your records, you can ask your doctor for a measles titer (blood test) which will let you know if you have immunity to measles. If you cannot locate written records of immunization, receiving extra doses of MMR is not harmful unless your doctor tells you there is a medical reason you cannot receive the vaccine.

Could I still get measles if I am fully vaccinated?

Very few people—about three out of 100—who get two doses of measles vaccine will still get measles if exposed to the virus. Experts aren't sure why. It could be that their immune systems didn't respond as well as they should have to the vaccine. But the good news is, fully vaccinated people who get measles are much more likely to have a milder illness. And fully vaccinated people 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.

SCHOOLS

Should schools exclude unvaccinated students and staff?

Unvaccinated students should not be excluded unless public health authorities are consulted. In the event an exposure to measles occurs at a school, public health authorities will recommend that all children and staff without proof of immunity be excluded from school and placed in quarantine (staying at home and away from public places). Public health officials will determine the appropriate length of time for the exclusion.

For more information, please visit

https://nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/measles/measles_guidance_schools.pdf

Should schools be closed during an outbreak of measles?

The New Jersey Department of Health generally does not recommend school closures. The decision to close a school is an administrative decision and one that should be made only after consultation with public health officials and district medical personnel.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- **NJDOH Measles**
<http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/measles.shtml>
- **New Jersey School Immunization Requirements**
https://nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
<http://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>