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Health Director Reports First Measles Case in Ohio

Dr. Amy Acton reminds Ohioans that vaccinations are the safest, most-effective way to prevent vaccine-preventable diseases

Editor’s Note: Video and audio on the importance of vaccination, measles FAQs, travel guidelines and more are available for use via the following links: [Video \(MP4\)](#) and [Audio \(MP3\)](#). Speaking is Sietske de Fijter, State Epidemiologist, Chief, Bureau of Infectious Diseases at the Ohio Department of Health.

COLUMBUS – Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Amy Acton, MD, MPH has confirmed the state’s first measles case of 2019. The young adult from Stark County recently traveled to a state with confirmed measles cases. ODH is currently not disclosing additional information about the infected individual.

Ohio occasionally sees measles cases as the result of importations from other countries where measles remains endemic. This is the first confirmed measles case in Ohio since 2017. Twenty-eight states, including many neighboring states, already have measles cases, with several having confirmed measles outbreaks. Previously, Ohio’s last confirmed measles outbreak was in 2014, with 382 confirmed cases.

“Vaccinations save lives, period. I urge everyone who can, to get vaccinated,” said Director Acton. “Vaccination is the safest, most effective way to prevent serious vaccine-preventable diseases in children and adults, including measles.”

Measles is extremely contagious and can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. If one person has measles, up to 90% of those who come into contact with that person and who are not immune will also become infected. The measles virus can live for up to two hours in air where an infected person coughed or sneezed. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch an infected surface and then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected. People infected with measles can spread it to others from four days before, through four days after, a rash appears.

Measles is still common in many parts of world, and large outbreaks are currently occurring in Israel, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Ukraine, and the Philippines. Travelers with measles bring the disease into U.S. where it can spread in communities with pockets of unvaccinated people. Those planning international travel are encouraged to contact their healthcare providers to ensure they are fully protected against measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases.

(more)

Confirmed Measles Cases, Ohio, 2009-2018

Year	Cases
2009	1
2010	2
2011	0
2012	1
2013	0
2014	382
2015	1
2016	0
2017	1
2018	0

Source: Ohio Disease Reporting System

Measles symptoms include a rash, high fever, runny nose, cough, loss of appetite and red, watery eyes. The rash usually lasts 5-6 days and begins at the hairline, moves to the face and upper neck, and proceeds down the body. Diarrhea and ear infections are common complications of measles. More severe complications may also occur.

Complications from measles are more common among children younger than 5 years of age, adults older than 20 years of age, pregnant women, and people with compromised immune systems.

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 an intellectual disability. One to three of every 1,000 children who become infected with measles will die from respiratory and neurologic complications

Measles may cause pregnant women who have not had the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine to give birth prematurely, or have a low-birth-weight baby

Vaccines stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the person against specific diseases. Some serious and potentially life-threatening diseases that vaccines can help prevent include but are not limited to measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough, chickenpox, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, and flu.

"One thing is really important – vaccination is critical. We are lucky to have a high vaccination rate in Stark County and Ohio, so the vast majority of the public is protected," said Kirkland Norris, Health Commissioner, Stark County Health Department.

ODH is sharing vaccination guidance and information with all its partners, including local health departments, hospitals, health care providers, K-12 educators and school nurses, higher education leaders, other state agencies and faith-based organizations.

"I recommend all Ohioans consult with their health care provider to make sure that you and your children have received all recommended vaccines," said Director Acton. "Especially before students return to school. If you do not have a health care provider, contact your local health department which may offer immunization clinics."

More information about measles is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website. General information can be found ([here](#)); recommended immunization schedules can be found ([here](#)); and the ODH Measles FAQ can be found ([here](#)).

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