



# Department of Public Health



## **MEASLES GUIDANCE & RECOMMENDATIONS - SCHOOLS K-12 (UPDATED)**

May 20, 2025

### **BACKGROUND**

The states of Texas and New Mexico have been experiencing a Measles outbreak that has affected many counties including El Paso County. As the number of confirmed measles cases in El Paso County continue to grow, most of the affected individuals have not been vaccinated against Measles, or their immunization status is unknown.

### **MEASLES KEY FACTS**

Measles is a highly contagious viral illness that typically begins with fever, cough, coryza (runny nose), and conjunctivitis (pink eye), followed by a characteristic rash. Measles can cause severe health complications, including pneumonia, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), and death.

The virus is transmitted by direct contact with infectious droplets or by airborne spread when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes. Measles virus can remain infectious in the air and on surfaces for up to 2 hours after an infected person leaves an area.

Infected people are contagious from 4 days before the rash starts through 4 days afterward. The incubation period for measles, from exposure to fever, is usually about 7–10 days, and from exposure to rash onset is usually about 10–14 days (with a range of 7 to 21 days).

A complete immunization schedule with 2 doses of Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine is 97% effective and confers appropriate long-lasting immunity against Measles. People considered high risk for Measles infection and complications are infants <12 mo of age, pregnant women, individuals who are severely immunosuppressed and unvaccinated individuals.

**Veerinder Taneja, MBBS; MPH – Director**

Department of Public Health | 9566 Railroad Dr. | El Paso, TX 79924

O: (915) 212-6502 | [ephealth.com](http://ephealth.com)



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## Current MMR Vaccination Schedule (Routine):

**1<sup>st</sup> Dose:** 12-15 months of age

**2<sup>nd</sup> Dose:** 4-6 years of age

## **WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A SUSPECT MEASLES CASE:**

Consider measles in students with:

- **RASH** starting at the forehead/hairline and spreading downward, **AND**
- Fever  $\geq 101^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $38.3^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) **OR**
- Cough, runny nose, or conjunctivitis

**IMMEDIATELY CALL** the City of El Paso Department of Public Health-Epidemiology upon **SUSPECTING** a potential measles case.

**24/7 Reporting Line: 915-212-6520.**

School officials must report suspected or confirmed Measles cases immediately according to Texas Law (Tex. Health and Safety Code §81.042; Tex Admin. Code §97.2 & §97.3), **do not wait for confirmation.**

## **ISOLATION OF ANY SUSPECT CASES:**

Immediately separate anyone with suspected Measles into a separate, well-ventilated room until parents come to pick up child.

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## EXCLUSION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF:

Exclusion means a student is **not allowed** to attend school or any extracurricular school activities such as childcare, clubs, and sports.

If a case of measles is identified in a school campus, staff and students attending such school will be considered exposed, whether the campus consist of one or multiple buildings, because of the viability of the virus in the school environment (for about 2 hrs suspended in the air within aerosols), the infectivity of the Measles virus and shared environment and common spaces within school buildings and rooms and interaction of people.

All staff who were born after 1957 and students  $\geq 4$  yrs of age attending the school with a confirmed case of Measles without adequate documentation of two doses of measles vaccine (unvaccinated, unknown vaccination status, or have an incomplete MMR immunization series) **are required to be immediately excluded from school** regardless of any documentation of vaccine exemption or waiver on file for medical, religious, or philosophical reason.

At-risk students and/or staff who have been excluded must **NOT** attend school for at least 21 days after the onset of the last known case of Measles in the school campus. It should be noted that if there are multiple cases of measles at a particular school, the student's exclusion might be significantly extended beyond 21 days, since the 21-day period would reset with the identification of each individual new case.

If an exposed staff can produce alternate evidence of immunity, such as a blood test showing antibodies to measles (also called an IgG antibody test), exclusion of staff may be downgraded to symptom monitoring instead, following discussion with DPH Epidemiology. Excluded

## WHEN STUDENTS AND STAFF ARE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO SCHOOL:

- **Confirmed cases:** Stay home until **4 days after rash onset**. (Tex. Admin. Code §97.7 (a)(15))
- **Suspected cases:** Stay home until measles is ruled out by a U.S. licensed healthcare professional.

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- **Students with 0 doses of MMR:** If the excluded student receives one documented dose of MMR, they may return to school immediately. A second dose of MMR will need to be received at least 28 days later to complete the 2-dose series. Students who do not complete the 2-dose series of MMR vaccine within 7 days of the minimum interval (28 days) **will be excluded from school.**
- **Students with one dose of measles vaccine:** If the student receives a second documented dose of MMR, they may return to school immediately upon school receipt of documentation of the second dose.
- **Students with unknown doses of measles vaccine:** If the student receives one documented dose of MMR, they may return to school immediately. A second dose of MMR will need to be received at least 28 days later to complete the 2-dose series or bring proof of complete MMR vaccination series (2 doses of MMR vaccine). Students who do not complete the 2-dose series of MMR vaccine within 7 days of the minimum interval (28 days) **will be excluded from school.**

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION:

Appropriate cleaning and disinfection with an EPA approved solution that has effective virucidal activity is recommended after a case of Measles present in the school setting. The isolation room should be well ventilated, and all surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected, properly disposing of contaminated items such as tissue paper and used PPE items.

## NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS:

Appropriate notification to parents should be provided in a timely manner. The School Public Information Office may coordinate with DPH Public Information Officer (PIO) for a joint message.

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