

Health guidance following confirmed Measles cases in 2024

As of March 14, 2024, a total of 58 measles cases were reported by 17 jurisdictions across the US, including Louisiana. Measles spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 9 out of 10 people around them will also become infected if they are not protected. Measles starts with a fever. Soon after, it causes a cough, runny nose, and red eyes. Then a rash of tiny, red spots breaks out. It starts at the head and spreads to the rest of the body. The rash can last for a week, and coughing can last for 10 days. Measles can cause serious health complications, such as pneumonia or encephalitis, and even death. Measles is highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. Protect your families and communities by making sure everyone is up to date on measles vaccine, including before traveling abroad. Other important points to know:

- Those at the highest risk of contracting measles are unvaccinated people (including babies too young to be vaccinated), travelers to areas where measles is circulating and healthcare workers.
- Cases are capable of quickly producing epidemics, especially in under vaccinated populations.
- A person with measles can spread it to others from 4 days *before* a rash appears - 4 days *after*.
- Pneumonia occurs in up to 6% of reported cases and accounts for 60% of deaths attributed to measles.
- Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) may also occur.
- Other complications include middle ear infections and convulsions.
- 20% of those infected with measles have an illness severe enough that results in hospitalization.
- Measles is more severe in infants than adults.

Measles symptoms: What to watch out for

Initial measles symptoms include a high fever that may spike as high as 104°, a cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. After two to three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots may appear inside the mouth. After three to five days, a rash will break out, usually appearing as flat red spots that appear on the face at the hairline, then spreading downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet. When the rash appears, a person's fever will typically spike and feel miserable. People who are immunocompromised, pregnant, young children and seniors are particularly susceptible to serious health issues from the virus.

What to do if you or your family have symptoms

Call your doctor, healthcare provider or [parish health unit](#) right away. The virus is very contagious and you do not want to expose someone in a waiting room. By calling first, the clinic can give you some instructions on where to go. Stay at home and avoid having visitors if you or your child are sick.

How to protect yourself from measles

Vaccination with measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) is a highly effective and safe way to prevent the contracting and spreading of measles. If you are unsure whether you've been vaccinated, ask your healthcare provider to find out if you need an MMR. You can also check your family's vaccine status at [MyIR](#). If you have not yet registered for MyIR, signing up is easy. Just follow the steps on the registration page: <https://myirmobile.com/register>. If your child is 1 year old or older, and has never received the MMR vaccine, it is not too late to get them vaccinated. The MMR vaccine is safe and effective. For more information, visit immunizations.la.gov.