

**SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT**

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Southwest Health District

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Public Health urges heightened awareness about measles

ALBANY–Following two confirmed cases of measles in the Atlanta area, Public Health officials are urging healthcare providers to maintain heightened awareness for patients with measles. Both residents with the diseases are now out of the infectious stage, but the Georgia Department of Public Health is notifying others who may have been exposed between Jan. 7-14.

Public Health officials say the risk of becoming ill is low. However, anyone who becomes sick with measles symptoms or thinks they have been exposed to measles should:

* Contact their healthcare provider immediately and let him or her know you may have been exposed to measles. If you don’t have a doctor, you should contact your county health department.
* **DO NOT** go to the doctor’s office, hospital or public health office without **FIRST** calling to let them know about your possible contact with measles. Your healthcare provider or public health nurse will advise you about what to do.
* If you think you might have measles, stay at home and avoid contact with others especially babies less than one year of age or people with weakened immune systems.
* Healthcare providers who suspect measles should notify Public Health immediately.

**Measles (Rubeola) Fact Sheet**

**What is measles?**

Measles (rubeola) is a highly contagious vaccine-preventable disease caused by a virus.

**How is measles spread?**

Measles is spread by air-borne droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

**What are symptoms of measles?**

Measles typically begins with a fever, followed by cough, runny nose, and/or red, watery eye. After two to three days, the fever peaks and a rash appears at the hairline and spreads progressively downward covering the face, neck, trunk and extremities.

**What kind of vaccine is given to prevent measles?**

The MMR vaccine prevents measles and two other viral diseases---mumps and rubella. More than 95% of the people who receive a single dose of MMR will develop immunity to all three viruses. A second dose boosts immunity, typically enhancing protection to 98%.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all persons be routinely vaccinated between 12 and 18 months of age and receive a booster between four and six years of age.

**Who is at increased risk of becoming infected with measles?**

* Infants who are too young to have been vaccinated (less than one year of age)
* Persons who have never been vaccinated
* Immunocompromised persons (these include persons undergoing cancer chemotherapy or other immune-suppressive treatments, transplant recipients or those with diseases that affect the immune system such as acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) or systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE)

**Who is at high risk for complications from a measles infection?**

* Infants and children less than five years of age
* Adults greater than 20 years old
* Pregnant women
* People with compromised immune systems

**What about older persons?**

Persons born before 1957 are generally considered immune because they probably had the disease when they were younger.

**Is it okay to go to public places (i.e., grocery store, work, day care, school etc.) if I have been exposed to measles and develop symptoms?**

No, if you have been exposed and you become ill with symptoms of measles you should avoid public places and contact your healthcare provider immediately. **DO NOT** go to the doctor’s office, the hospital or a Public Health clinic without **FIRST** calling to let them know about your possible exposure to measles. Your healthcare provider or Public Health nurse will advise you about what you should do.

In the past 10 years, there have been seven confirmed cases of measles in Georgia, including one imported from another country.

For more information about measles, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>.

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