



Frequently Asked Questions: Measles in Educational Settings

Why are there more measles cases in the news lately?

Most people in the United States are protected against measles because they're vaccinated. The US has recently had a large increase in measles cases because fewer people have gotten the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Unvaccinated travelers to and from communities in the US where groups of people are unvaccinated, and to and from other countries where measles is still common, can get infected and spread it to others.

Does measles pose a health risk in educational settings?

Measles is a serious illness that spreads very easily, especially in people who've never gotten the MMR vaccine or had measles. Because of this, it can be a serious health risk in educational settings. If many students and staff are not vaccinated, the chance of measles spreading between people goes up. Some people, including those with certain health conditions, are more likely to get very sick if they catch measles.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles can cause these symptoms:

- High Fever (101°F or higher)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red watery eyes
- A rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body

Measles can cause health complications, such as ear infections and diarrhea. It can also cause serious illness, such as pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling around the brain), and even death.

What should educational settings do if someone has measles?

Follow these guidelines when students or staff:

Are confirmed or suspected of having measles	Exclude them for 4 days before the rash starts until 4 days after the rash starts as long as they are well enough to return.
Never had the MMR vaccine or measles	Exclude them for 21 days after exposure to a person with confirmed or suspected measles or until an immunity test confirms they are protected.



Key messages

- Measles is a virus that lives in the nose and throat. It spreads very easily to others when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes.
- Measles is a health risk for students and staff who've never had the MMR vaccine or measles.
- Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting and spreading measles.
- The Rhode Island Department of Health is taking steps to prevent the spread of measles in Rhode Island.

Educational settings include schools, child care settings, summer camps, colleges, and universities.



How can educational settings prevent the spread of measles?

Follow these tips to keep your school, child care, summer camp, or higher education setting healthy.

Ask families and staff to know their vaccination status. Getting vaccinated is the best way to keep from getting and spreading measles. People should get the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine if they haven't been vaccinated or don't know if they got the MMR vaccine before.

Ask families to call their healthcare professional first. People who don't know their vaccination status should talk to their healthcare professional about it. If they have symptoms of measles or may have had contact with someone with measles, they should call their healthcare professional **before** going to their office. This prevents the spread of measles to other patients.

Ask staff to know the signs of measles. Teachers and personnel should know the symptoms of measles so they can identify them and take action when students and staff may be ill.

Ask students and staff to stay home when they're sick. Staying home, along with covering coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue, washing hands often with soap and water, and not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, helps stop people from getting and spreading disease.

Where can families get vaccinated?

Families can call their healthcare professional to get an MMR vaccine, which may be covered by insurance. Contact Asthenis Public Health Hub at 401-473-3958 or your local community health center to learn about vaccination options for people without insurance.

How should educational settings address families' concerns about measles?

Emphasize that measles can be prevented with the MMR vaccine. Making sure their immunizations are up to date can help family members protect themselves, their loved ones, and their community.

Let families know that the Rhode Island Department of Health works to stop people from getting and spreading measles by:

- Investigating all measles cases in the state.
- Identifying and following up with people who may have had contact with someone with measles.
- Educating healthcare professionals about measles symptoms, diagnosis, and reporting.
- Taking safety measures, like giving the MMR vaccine or restricting participation in school or work, for unvaccinated people who may have come into contact with people exposed to measles.
- Reporting cases to the Rhode Island Department of Health so they can monitor the impact measles is having across the state.

Where can Rhode Islanders get more information?

Rhode Island Department of Health
health.ri.gov/measles | 401-222-5960

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/measles | 800-CDC-INFO | 800-232-4636

