COUNTY OF ALLEGHENY
SARA INNAMORATO
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Dear parent/guardian:

The measles outbreak in Pennsylvania continues to spread across the state. Measles is a serious disease caused by a virus that spreads very easily to others. Measles can spread quickly in schools, because students and staff spend a lot of time in the same rooms together. Outbreaks can result in time out of school that disrupts learning.

What is Measles?

Measles is a very contagious disease caused by a virus. It is so contagious that if an individual has it, up to 9 out of 10 people close to him or her will also become infected if they are not protected.

It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Someone can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, even up to 2 hours after that person has left.

People who are sick with measles can spread the disease to others from 4 days before to 4 days after they develop a rash.

The first symptoms of measles start about 7-14 days after someone is exposed to the virus. It often starts with a fever, a cough, a runny nose, and red eyes. Then, a rash of flat red spots breaks out. The rash starts at the head and spreads to the rest of the body.

Common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. Severe complications can include pneumonia (lung infection) and encephalitis (brain swelling). Another potential complication of measles is immune amnesia. This is a temporary change in the body's ability to recognize and fight other viruses and bacteria it was previously protected from. Some people with severe measles illness may require hospitalization or even die.

How can measles be prevented?

Vaccination remains the most reliable and effective tool for preventing measles. Two doses of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine provide 97% protection against measles, and one dose provides 93% protection. Most people who received two doses of the MMR vaccine or who were born before 1957 are protected for life and do not need a measles booster. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have any questions.

What happens if my child gets measles?

People who are infected with measles are contagious from four days before they develop a rash until 4 days after they develop a rash. During this time, they cannot go to school, work, or other activities and must be isolated at home. Anyone that was in contact with them while they were infectious must quarantine if they do not have evidence of immunity.

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PHAB Advancing public health performance

What happens if my child is exposed to measles?

People who have gotten the MMR vaccine or have other evidence of immunity can go about their lives as normal if they are exposed to measles. People who have not gotten the MMR vaccine or have no evidence of immunity must quarantine for 21 days, starting 5 days after their exposure. This means that they cannot go to school, work, or other activities and must quarantine at home.

What can parents/guardians of children who attend school do?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent measles. If your child has not received the MMR vaccine, please talk with your healthcare providers or call the ACHD Immunization Clinic at 412-578-8062 to schedule an appointment. If your child is exposed to measles, they do not have to quarantine if they have been vaccinated.

All people should know their immunity status. This can help you avoid quarantine if you are exposed to measles. If you are not sure if you are immune, talk to your healthcare provider. Some people find their vaccination records in their baby books. Some people call their pediatrician to try and find their records. You may be able to access your, or your dependent's, official immunization record through the secure Pennsylvania Immunization Electronic Registry System Public Portal. If your provider did not voluntarily report your vaccines, or you were vaccinated a long time ago, or you were vaccinated in another state, visit the CDC's Contacts for IIS Immunization Records website.

What is the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) doing?

Healthcare providers and laboratories report cases of measles to ACHD. Public health staff call people who have been infected or exposed to measles and work to identify how people are getting infected and prevent more people from becoming infected. ACHD works closely with school nurses, school administrators, and health care providers to make sure that they have the information that they need to identify and respond to possible cases of measles. Our goal is to help people in Allegheny County stay healthy.

Where Can I Find More Information?

- ACHD Measles
- ACHD Immunization Clinic
- Pennsylvania Department of Health Measles
- Measles (CDC)
- Measles Vaccine Recommendations | Measles (Rubeola) | CDC
- ACHD Guide For Uninsured and Underinsured

Thank you for helping to protect the public's health in Allegheny County.

Sincerely,



Iulia Vann, MD
Director, Allegheny County Health Department