

**HEALTH ALERT NETWORK | HEALTH ADVISORY | February 24, 2025**

## **Be Vigilant for Measles Cases**

The current measles outbreak in [Texas](#) and [New Mexico](#), which has now grown to 99 cases, is raising concern for the potential of further spread, including to North Dakota. In 2024, the United States experienced 285 cases, the majority of which were in children and unvaccinated, with 42% of the 2024 cases needing hospitalization.

[No cases have been identified in North Dakota](#). Vaccination rates have declined in North Dakota with [81% of children age 19-35 months](#) and [90% of North Dakota kindergarteners](#) up-to-date on measles vaccine. Local rates vary greatly, with some areas more susceptible to outbreaks. Experts believe measles immunization coverage needs to be above 95% to prevent outbreaks of disease.

North Dakota Health and Human Services (ND HHS) would like North Dakota healthcare providers to consider [measles](#) in their patients with signs and symptoms, including cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis, fever, malaise and [maculopapular rash](#). People at increased risk of contracting measles include those who are unvaccinated, immunocompromised or have recently traveled to areas with measles cases or where measles is endemic. Suspected cases of measles should immediately be reported to the ND HHS Disease Control and Forensic Pathology Section by calling 1.800.472.2180 or 701.328.2378. Individuals who are suspected to have measles should immediately be placed in a negative pressure room or roomed alone if in a hospital or clinical setting. Individuals should isolate at home while awaiting test results. Providers should order a [PCR](#) and [IgM](#) tests on patients for whom measles is suspected.

Providers are also reminded to encourage measles vaccination, especially for unvaccinated people planning to travel abroad or to domestic areas with measles cases. Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is routinely recommended around the first birthday and at four to six years of age. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended to ensure proper protection against measles. People born before 1957 are presumed to be immune to measles, as these individuals have a high likelihood of having had the disease.

Measles is a dangerous illness. About one in 500 people who are infected with measles will die. Hospitalization is typically required in least 20% of people, and treatment options are limited to supportive care. Because the virus is airborne, people infected with measles are extremely contagious and should be hospitalized in a negative pressure room, although outbreaks threaten to exceed this resource quickly. Those with no immunity who are exposed to measles must quarantine for 21 days after exposure, which may include missing school or work.

For more information, including regional data on vaccination coverage, please visit the North Dakota Immunization Unit website at <https://hhs.nd.gov/immunizations>.

