



New Jersey Department of Health Vaccine Preventable Disease Program **EXPOSED TO MEASLES?**

New Jersey residents may be notified by public health authorities, or their health care providers, that they have unknowingly been exposed to a case of measles or suspected measles. We understand that you may have questions or concerns. The purpose of this document is to help explain what is considered an exposure and what you need to do if you have been told that you have been exposed to measles.

If you are receiving a printed copy of this document, a web version is available by scanning the QR code or at: nj.gov/health/measles/information/measles-exposure.



Exposure

How do people get measles?

Measles is easily spread from person to person. When an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes, the virus is released into the air and enters another person's body through the nose, mouth or throat. People can also become sick if they come in contact with the mucus or saliva (spit) from an infected person. The measles virus can live on contaminated surfaces and in the air for up to two hours. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the contaminated surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected. Measles may be transmitted from four (4) days before through four (4) days after rash onset.

What does it mean to be "exposed" to measles?

"Exposed" means you've been in a situation where you can catch the virus from someone who already has measles. For example, you can be exposed to the measles virus by being in the same room, home, office, or waiting room with someone who has measles or by being there up to two hours after the person with measles has left. People are less likely to get sick with measles if they have been appropriately vaccinated. Approximately 90% of unvaccinated people will get measles if they are exposed to someone with the disease.

What should I do if I (or my child) was exposed to measles?

- **Call** your health care provider or [local health department \(nj.gov/health/lh/community/index.shtml\)](https://nj.gov/health/lh/community/index.shtml) as soon as possible to discuss your exposure.
- **Do NOT** visit a medical facility unless you **call BEFORE** arrival to inform them that you were exposed to measles. You could be infectious before you have symptoms of measles. Special arrangements must be made for you to be evaluated without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.

- Check if you are immune to measles. See below: “[How do you know if someone is immune to measles?](#)”
 - If you or your child are not immune, or don’t know if you are immune, you may be advised to stay home (quarantine) and away from work, school, and public places for 21 days to ensure you/your child do not become infected and pass measles to others.
 - If you are immune to measles, you do not need to be quarantined and may continue with your normal activities.
- Monitor for any symptoms of measles until 21 days after exposure.

If I was exposed to measles, can I get treatment?

If you are not immune or don’t know if you are immune to measles, getting the vaccine may help prevent disease, but only if given within 72 hours of first exposure.

Immune globulin (IG), a blood product containing antibodies to the measles virus, is a medical way to prevent measles from becoming more serious in some people after they are exposed to the virus, if given within six (6) days of first exposure. It may be given to some infants <12 months of age, pregnant women (who are not immune), or persons with weakened immune systems. Discuss the risks and benefits of getting IG with your health care provider. If you are eligible, your health care provider or local health department will coordinate arrangements, including finding a location with IG, scheduling an appointment, and giving you special instructions for when you arrive. Do NOT enter any medical facility to request IG without having an appointment. Individuals who receive IG will need to **quarantine for 28 days** from exposure.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with measles-like symptoms, including fever, rash, runny nose, cough, loss of appetite, and “pink eye,” **call** your health care provider or local health department. If you need medical care, you must **call BEFORE** going to any medical facility and inform them that you were exposed to measles and that you have symptoms, to prevent exposure to other patients and medical office staff. Do NOT enter any medical facility without notifying them before arrival. You should not go to work or school if you are sick.

Immunity to Measles

What is immunity?

Immunity means protection from disease. People who may have been exposed to measles need to show proof of immunity.

How do you know if someone is immune to measles (for non-health care workers only)?

Generally, a person is considered immune ([immunize.org/ask-experts/what-is-considered-acceptable-evidence-of-immunity-to-measles](https://www.immunize.org/ask-experts/what-is-considered-acceptable-evidence-of-immunity-to-measles)) if they:

1. Had measles in the past, and have laboratory confirmation to prove it, OR

2. Have laboratory evidence (a blood test that shows whether the body has antibodies to fight off the virus) of immunity, OR
3. Have written documentation of adequate vaccination with measles-containing vaccine in the past (often given as MMR [measles, mumps, and rubella] vaccine)
 - One or more doses of a measles-containing vaccine administered on or after the first birthday for preschool-age children and adults not at high risk
 - Two doses of measles-containing vaccine for school-age children and adults at high risk, including college students, health care personnel, and international travelers, OR
4. Were born *before* 1957

Why are people (non-healthcare workers) born before 1957 considered immune?

People born before 1957 lived through several years of epidemic measles before the first measles vaccine was licensed. As a result, these people are very likely to have had the measles disease. Surveys suggest that 95% to 98% of those born before 1957 are immune to measles.

Do people who received MMR in the 1960s need to have their dose repeated?

Not necessarily. People who have documentation of receiving LIVE measles vaccine in the 1960s do not need to be revaccinated. People who were vaccinated prior to 1968 with either inactivated (killed) measles vaccine or measles vaccine of unknown type should be revaccinated with at least one dose of live attenuated measles vaccine. This recommendation is intended to protect those who may have received killed measles vaccine, which was available in 1963-1967 and was not effective.

What should I do if I'm unsure whether I'm immune to measles?

If you're unsure whether you're immune to measles, you should first try to [find your vaccination records](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/keeping-vaccine-records-up-to-date.html) (cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/keeping-vaccine-records-up-to-date.html) or documentation of measles immunity. Your health care provider can help determine if you are immune to measles by reviewing your medical history, ordering a blood test to determine whether you're immune, or recommending vaccination. The best protection against measles is vaccination, and it is safe to get a measles vaccine if you are not sure if you are immune.

How can I locate my immunization records?

Contact your health care provider regarding your past immunization history. Your family, schools, colleges, prior employers, or the military (if you were enlisted) may also have records of your immunization history. If you are, or have been, pregnant your obstetrician's office may have also tested you for measles when they tested you for rubella.

You may also be included in your state's immunization registry. For NJ residents, you can request your immunization record through [NJ Immunization Information System \(NJIIS\)](https://njiis.nj.gov/docs/requestImmunizationRecord/Getting_Started.pdf) (https://njiis.nj.gov/docs/requestImmunizationRecord/Getting_Started.pdf). If you lived in another state, you may be in their registry: [Contacts for Immunization Information Systems \(IIS\)](https://www.cdc.gov/iis/contacts-locate-records/) (<https://www.cdc.gov/iis/contacts-locate-records/>).

Please visit the CDC website for additional suggestions on how to locate your vaccination records: [cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/keeping-vaccine-records-up-to-date.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/keeping-vaccine-records-up-to-date.html).

About Measles Vaccine

How well does the measles vaccine work?

The measles vaccine works extremely well. If 1,000 people each get two doses of measles vaccine, about 997 of them will be protected against measles (immune).

Getting two doses of vaccine is important, because some people (about 2-5 per 100) do not become protected (immune) after just one dose of vaccine.

Does the measles vaccine protect against other diseases too?

In the US, measles vaccine is almost always given as a combination with vaccine against two other viruses: mumps and rubella. This combination vaccine is called MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) and it gives protection against all three viruses.

What are the risks from MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine?

Most people who get MMR vaccine do not have any problems with it. Mild side effects such as sore arm, fever, and mild rash can occur. As with any medicine, there is a very small chance of a vaccine causing a severe allergic reaction, other serious injury, or death, but this risk is very small. Getting MMR vaccine is much safer than getting any of these three diseases.

See Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) for more information:

[MMR Vaccine Information Statements \(VIS\): immunize.org/vaccines/vis/mmr/](https://www.immunize.org/vaccines/vis/mmr/)

[MMRV Vaccine Information Statements \(VIS\): immunize.org/vaccines/vis/mmrv/](https://www.immunize.org/vaccines/vis/mmrv/)

About Quarantine

What is quarantine?

Quarantine means staying at home and away from other people during the period when someone could get sick. This includes not going to daycare/school/work, group and social activities, sports and recreation events, and public places like cinemas and shopping malls.

Who needs to be quarantined?

Quarantine is for people who are not immune or don't know if they are immune to measles and who have been exposed to someone with measles. It is an important part of stopping measles from spreading in the community.

Why is the quarantine period for measles 21 days?

The incubation period (time between being exposed to the measles virus and the appearance of the first symptoms) for measles is up to 21 days. We begin quarantine from day 5 from first exposure and

continue through 21 days from last exposure. Quarantine should occur in consultation with public health authorities, who will be able to help you determine the appropriate dates for quarantine.

If I get the vaccine now, will the quarantine be shorter?

If you were able to receive the vaccine within 72 hours after first exposure to someone with measles, you might not need to be quarantined. However, if you receive the vaccine after 72 hours, you will need to be quarantined for 21 days.

Do household members of a quarantined person need to be vaccinated?

See above: "[How do you know if someone is immune to measles?](#)" Household members who are immune to measles do not need to be vaccinated. Household members who are not immune, or don't know if they are immune, should consider getting vaccinated.

Can anyone come into the house where a person is quarantined?

No. Entering the home where a person is quarantined is highly discouraged. However, in cases requiring caregivers such as a child or the elderly, only individuals with immunity to measles should enter the household. Please see above: "[How do you know if someone is immune to measles?](#)"

If I have been exposed to measles, can I spread it to others in my household while I am under quarantine?

If you do not get measles, you cannot spread it to others. However, because you are still in the period where you could become ill, you may not know you are infectious. You can spread the disease before you have symptoms. Therefore, it is best to limit contact with those in your household and they should review their immune status. If there are other individuals living in the home of the quarantined person who are not immune to measles, the likelihood that they will get sick with measles may be reduced if the quarantined person stays inside their designated room/area, avoids contact with others, and wears a mask when in common rooms. Please see above: "[How do you know if someone is immune to measles?](#)"

Does the quarantined person need to wear a mask when leaving the house?

The quarantined person should **not** leave the house. If the quarantined person needs to receive essential medical care, they must **call BEFORE** going to any medical facility and inform them that they were exposed to measles. The medical facility will need to make special arrangements, which may include a mask.

Resources

New Jersey Department of Health: nj.gov/health/measles/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/measles

NJ Local Health Department Directory: nj.gov/health/lh/community