

NEWS BRIEF

Measles Outbreak Expands: What You Need to Know

More than 465 people from 19 states—the majority of whom are children—have been infected by the measles in the United States this year. This outbreak is now the second-highest total number of cases since the disease was declared eliminated in the United States almost 20 years ago, and it's only April.

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious illness caused by a virus called rubeola. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns that if one person contracts the disease, up to 90% of those close to them will become infected too if they aren't immune.

People are most susceptible to contracting this illness in early childhood. Measles usually causes fatigue, runny nose, cough, slight fever, and head and back pains. In later stages, it can cause a high fever, Koplik's spots (small white dots) inside the mouth and a rash that starts around the hairline and spreads downward.

Measles has a 25% hospitalization rate, is not treatable and has no cure. The virus can lead to serious complications, such as encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain. In some extremely

severe cases, measles and its complications can be fatal.

How can the measles be prevented?

Measles can be prevented with the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. This vaccine is typically given in two different doses, the first being administered between 12 to 15 months of age and the second being administered between 4 to 6 years of age. The CDC reports that the two doses together are 97% effective at preventing the disease, while just getting one dose is 93% effective at preventing the disease.

Without being vaccinated, you're at risk of contracting measles, especially because it is a highly contagious illness. If you live in an area that's experiencing a measles outbreak, call your doctor for recommendations on what to do. Your doctor may recommend staying in your house until the outbreak subsides.



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