

NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ALERT

Measles Case in Santa Fe County, NM

June 14, 2022

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) has confirmed a case of measles in an unvaccinated child less than five years of age in Santa Fe County. The case occurred in mid-May, but due to delays in diagnosis, was only reported recently.

Initial investigation suggests that the risk of additional cases is limited – but because of the highly contagious nature and potentially long incubation period (7-21 days), additional cases could be presenting in the community. **The New Mexico Department of Health wants to advise clinicians in the Santa Fe area to consider measles in patients with acute febrile rash illnesses, especially if they are unvaccinated or have recently traveled internationally (including among refugees).**

Measles is characterized by a prodrome of fever, malaise, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis, followed by a maculopapular rash. The rash begins on the head and spreads down the body, and usually appears about 14 days after exposure. A person with measles is contagious from 4 days before to 4 days after the rash appears.

Measles is an extremely contagious disease. We recommend that patients with suspected measles (fever and rash at triage) not be allowed in the waiting room with others. Preferably patients are initially evaluated outside the clinic. If you suspect measles, immediately isolate the patient in a negative-pressure room.

If there is no negative pressure room in your facility, ensure that the patient is masked and placed in a private room. Any room occupied by a suspected measles patient should not be used for two hours after the patient leaves, due to measles virus remaining suspended in the air during that time. Patients suspected of having measles should be instructed to isolate themselves at home until four days after rash onset. High risk contacts, such as pregnant persons or those with compromised immune systems, may need additional evaluation.

If measles is suspected, obtain both a serum specimen for IgM testing and a throat swab or nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport medium for PCR testing. **Notify the health department immediately for any suspected cases of measles by calling the Epidemiology and Response Division, available 24/7 at 505-827-0006.**

In addition, healthcare settings should ensure that all staff have received two doses of MMR vaccine, or have lab evidence of immunity to measles. Routine MMR vaccination is recommended to start at 12 months of age, with a second dose at 4 to 6 years of age. Before traveling internationally, patients between the ages of 6 to 11 months should

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receive one dose of MMR, while patients >12 months of age should have two documented doses of MMR, spaced at least 28 days apart. Note that breakthrough measles infection in vaccinated persons are very rare – if it occurs, it is usually milder with a significantly lower risk of transmission.

For more information, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html> or call the NMDOH Epidemiology and Response Division at 505-827-0006.

CDC travel notices regarding measles can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html>