

TN Health Alert Network Communication: Measles

March 19, 2024

Summary

Since December 2023, there has been a [significant rise in measles cases](#) in the United States and globally. Numerous patients with measles infection have had delayed identification in healthcare and community settings, leading to additional exposures and ongoing disease transmission. Clinicians should **rapidly identify suspected measles infections, isolate patients quickly and inform public health** by reporting suspected measles cases to the Tennessee Department of Health at 615-741-7247.

Recommendations to Identify, Isolate and Inform:

1. *Identify* – Clinicians should maintain high suspicion for measles in unvaccinated individuals who present with fever and rash, especially with history of travel to states or countries with recent measles cases. Measles is a highly contagious viral illness characterized by a prodrome of fever, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis followed by a maculopapular rash that begins on the head and descends to the neck, trunk, upper extremities, and lower extremities. Although less likely, measles infection may be considered in individuals with history of one or two doses of MMR vaccine if clinical presentation is consistent or epidemiological link to a known case is present.
2. *Isolate* – To avoid exposures within healthcare facilities, patients presenting with concern for measles or compatible symptoms should be immediately masked with a surgical mask and isolated in a room with a closed door. [Airborne precautions](#) should be implemented, including placement in a negative pressure airborne isolation room as available. Measles virus can remain suspended in the air for up to two hours after an infected person has vacated an area. Areas where suspected cases have spent time should be closed off and remain unoccupied for at least two hours. Patients with suspected measles should be cared for by staff with confirmed [immunity to measles](#).
3. *Inform* – Clinicians should immediately report suspected measles cases to **the Tennessee Department of Health by calling the Vaccine Preventable Diseases Program at 615-471-7247**. Public health should be informed prior to testing being obtained.

Testing

Measles testing is available at the TDH State Public Health Laboratory with prior consultation and approval from a member of the Vaccine Preventable Disease and Immunization Program (VPDIP). **Clinicians should call TDH immediately at 615-741-7247 to report any suspected measles infection and to request testing approval.** Specimens for measles serology and PCR testing should be collected at the same time, including serum for serology and a nasopharyngeal or oropharyngeal swab in viral transport media for measles PCR. Please refer to the TDH [Laboratory Directory of Services](#) for detailed information on specimen collection, storage, and transport.

For more information

Additional information concerning measles reporting requirements, general information, and cases and outbreaks can be found at the below links.

- [TDH Measles Webpage](#)
- [CDC Measles Webpage](#)
- [CDC Measles Cases and Outbreaks](#)

Thank you for your participation in public health in Tennessee. Please contact 615-741-7247 to reach the TDH Vaccine Preventable Diseases and Immunization Program.
