



HEALTH ADVISORY # 209

New Case of Measles Confirmed in Kentucky: Potential Exposure to West Virginia Residents

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and Other Healthcare Facilities

FROM: Matthew Christiansen, MD, MPH - Commissioner and State Health Officer
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health

DATE: February 28, 2023

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: Please distribute to community health providers, hospital-based physicians, infection control preventionists, laboratory directors and other applicable partners.

OTHER RECIPIENTS: Please distribute to association members, staff, etc.

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health was notified by the Kentucky Department for Public Health of a confirmed case of measles in an unvaccinated individual who attended a large gathering on February 17 & 18, 2023 at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky while infectious.

The large numbers of people that attended the gathering from across Kentucky and other states may have been exposed. The spiritual revival gathering was a spontaneous event that occurred from February 8, 2023 through February 23, 2023 and more than 50,000 attendees are estimated to have attended. No ticketing or registration occurred at the event to identify attendees. An estimated 20,000 people are thought to have attended the gathering on the days the measles exposure occurred. The case-patient was infectious from February 16, 2023 to February 24, 2023. The case-patient also visited several additional public settings in Kentucky that are currently being investigated.

Clinical Information

Measles is an acute viral respiratory illness characterized by a prodrome of fever and malaise, cough, runny nose (coryza), and red watery eyes (conjunctivitis). The rash usually appears about 14 days after a person is exposed. The rash spreads from the head to the trunk to the lower extremities. Patients are considered to be contagious from 4 days before to 4 days after their rash appears. It is spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. Two to three (2-3) days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (also known as Koplik spots) may appear inside the mouth.

Three to seven (3-7) days after symptoms begin, a rash breaks out. It usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face/hairline and spread downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. Small, raised bumps may also appear on top of the flat red spots. The spots may become joined together as they spread from the head to the rest of the body. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104° Fahrenheit. The rash can last 4-7 days and fades in the same order it appears, from head to the rest of the body.

Other symptoms include diarrhea, lack of appetite, and generalized lymph node swelling.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance. Warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation. Unlikely to require immediate action.

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers

1. Clinicians should have heightened suspicion for measles given the known community exposures among patients with clinically compatible measles symptoms who have not received measles-containing vaccine, including those who may have postponed or missed doses.
2. Measles should be considered in individuals who have symptoms that meet the criteria for measles and who have had travel to Kentucky regardless of attendance at the spiritual revival gathering. Individuals of any age who are not vaccinated have a high chance of exposure to measles when traveling to areas where measles cases are common or where there is an outbreak occurring.
3. Measles is a Category I disease in West Virginia. All suspected cases should be reported immediately to your local health department or contact the Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services, Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) at (304) 558-5358 ext. 2.
4. The WV Office of Laboratory Services (state public health laboratory) has referral testing for certain vaccine preventable diseases. It is recommended that either a nasopharyngeal swab or throat swab be collected from all patients with clinical features compatible with measles.
 - a. Detection of measles RNA is most successful when samples are collected on the first day of rash through 3 days following onset of rash. Detection of measles RNA by RT-PCR may be successful as late as 10-4 days after rash onset.
 - b. Swabs should be placed in viral transport media and stored at 4°C if shipping within 24 hours. Ship on cold packs. Specimen containers must be labeled with the patient's name (or other unique identifier) and date of collection. The name on the container must match the name of the test request form.
 - c. Healthcare providers must have been identified by DIDE as a suspect case to be accepted for testing, please report all suspected cases prior to specimen collection and submission for timely coordination of testing and genotyping.

Additional Information

CDC for Healthcare Providers: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/hcp/index.html>.

CDC Measles At-a-Glance Factsheet: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/downloads/Measles-fact-sheet-508.pdf>

DIDE Measles Healthcare Provider Information & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):
https://oeeps.wv.gov/measles/documents/hcp/measles_provider_faq.pdf

For questions about this health alert, contact the Office of Epidemiology and Prevention Services, Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology (DIDE) at (304) 558-5358 ext. 2.

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