

There are currently several measles outbreaks occurring in California, most of which have been linked to international travel. As a result, the City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services is working to enhance prevention efforts by increasing education and encouraging individuals to get vaccinated, especially before traveling.

■ WHAT IS MEASLES?

Measles is a highly contagious and potentially severe disease that causes fever, rash, cough, and red, watery eyes. Measles spreads very easily by air and by direct contact with an infected person.

■ HOW DOES MEASLES SPREAD?

The virus spreads easily through the air when a sick person coughs or sneezes. The virus can stay in the air for up to two hours, even if the sick person has left the room. You can become infected by being in a room that a sick person was in or by touching objects that they've touched.

Up to 90% of people who have never been vaccinated against or sick with the measles will become infected if they have contact with the virus. A person with measles can spread the disease to others even before they have any symptoms.

■ WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF MEASLES?

Measles can cause:

- High fever (over 101 °F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red watery eyes
- A rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body

■ WHAT COMPLICATIONS CAN MEASLES CAUSE?

Measles can cause ear infections and diarrhea. It can also cause serious illness, such as pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and even death. Anyone can suffer complications, however some groups, such as infants and children aged <5 years, adults aged >20 years, pregnant women, and people with weak immune systems due to Leukemia or HIV, are more likely to have serious health problems due to measles.

■ HOW IS MEASLES TREATED?

There is no treatment for measles. Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and managing serious health problems that can happen.

■ WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT MEASLES?

Getting vaccinated is the best way to keep from getting and spreading measles. The MMR vaccine's safety and effectiveness records are strong. People should get measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine if they haven't been vaccinated or don't know if they have had MMR vaccine before. Kids should be vaccinated at 12-15 months of age and again at 4-6 years of age. Anyone born after 1957 who hasn't been vaccinated should get their MMR vaccine. Infants between 6 and 12 months old are recommended to get an MMR prior to any international travel. If you're traveling soon and are unsure whether you are immune to measles or don't have two documented MMR, contact your doctor.

■ WHERE CAN YOU GO TO GET VACCINATED?

Call your doctor to get an MMR vaccine, which may be covered by your insurance. You may also be vaccinated at a pharmacy or at a clinic offering no or low-cost vaccinations.

■ WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE MEASLES?

If you think that you or someone in your family has been exposed to or has measles, call your doctor's office right away. Tell them that you might have measles before you go, so they can take steps to prevent other patients and staff from being exposed.

■ WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT MEASLES?

- California Department of Public Health: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/measles.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/>
- Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services: www.longbeach.gov/measles

