



Chester County Health Department

Measles Guidance For Schools

Purpose:

This document provides guidance for schools on actions to take in advance of any potential for measles to impact the school population and outlines actions to be taken if a case or exposed person is identified in the school population.

Key Points:

- A single case of measles is a public health priority.
- Measles can spread rapidly.
- Measles spreads through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes, or through direct contact.
- People can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been. This can happen even up to 2 hours after the infected person has left the room.
- Measles is communicable four days BEFORE the onset of rash.
- Persons with measles or who have been exposed to measles should be excluded from school, school activities, sports, extracurricular activities, etc. to stop the spread of the virus.
- Two doses of MMR vaccine are 97% effective in preventing measles, and one dose is 93% effective in preventing measles.
- The Chester County Health Department will investigate all measles cases and identify individuals who have been exposed. Post-exposure prophylaxis and/or exclusion differ according to age, immunization status, and the amount of time that has passed since the last exposure. The Chester County Health Department will assist in determining next steps for students/staff who are exposed.

High Risk Population:

Individuals without at least 1 dose of MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) are at the highest risk of becoming infected with measles and continuing the spread of the virus.

Fortunately, Chester County's school-aged population has a high rate of MMR vaccine as shown below which includes all children enrolled in public and private school throughout the County, including home-school enrollments. This data comes from the State Immunization Law Report (SILR) submitted by schools annually.

School Year 2023-2024

County: 15 - Chester		
Grade	Total Students Enrolled	MMR 2 Doses or More
Kindergarten - Total	6,320	5,985
Percentage:		94.7%
7th Grade - Total	7,726	7,430
Percentage:		96.2%
12th Grade - Total	8,567	8,359
Percentage:		97.6%
Number of schools reporting:	169	



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Anyone traveling internationally to areas where measles is spreading is at risk for measles. Persons who are pregnant or have a suppressed immune system have a greater risk of developing complications due to measles.

Actions to Take Now:

1. **Create a list of students and staff who have not received or only have 1 dose of MMR vaccine.** Having timely access to this list will expedite identification of your highest risk students and staff. This group of students/staff may be excluded from school for 21 days if a case of measles occurs among a student or staff member in the school building. Exclusion means that students/staff cannot come to school and cannot participate in any school activities or extracurricular events.
2. **Communicate in advance with parents and staff.** Schools are encouraged to communicate broadly about [vaccination recommendations](#) and the potential impact of being excluded from school for up to 21 days in the event of a measles case/exposure.
3. **Promote respiratory hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.** Schools are encouraged to remind students and staff about respiratory hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.
4. **Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick.** Schools are encouraged to remind students and staff to remain home if they are ill for any reason, particularly if they have any measles symptoms, or are aware that they have been exposed to measles.
5. **Watch for signs and symptoms of measles among students and staff.** Schools are encouraged to review the [signs and symptoms of measles](#) and be watchful for students/staff who may come to school with fever and other signs and symptoms of measles. Measles is communicable four days BEFORE the onset of rash. Because the initial signs of measles mimic many other illnesses, it may be difficult to identify measles unless there are known cases in the immediate area.
6. **Identify room for persons with suspected measles.** If any student/staff is suspected of having measles while present in the school, they should be isolated in a room until they are able to leave the school.
7. **Ensure appropriate personal protective equipment is available.** At minimum, school nurses are recommended to have access to standard and airborne precautions: N-95 respirator, gloves, eye protection, and disposable gown.

Actions to Take if Measles is Suspected or a Case is Identified:

1. **Isolate suspected measles cases.** If the school suspects a person to have measles while at school, the person should be provided a mask and leave school immediately. If the person cannot leave school immediately, they should be isolated in a separate room. Any one suspected of measles should be directed to CALL health care provider or an urgent care center immediately.

Measles may be suspected if the person meets the following criteria:



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- Exhibits typical measles symptoms; **AND**
 - Recently traveled internationally, or had a known measles exposure; **OR**
 - Does not have at least 1 dose of MMR vaccine
2. **Report suspected measles cases.** Report to the Chester County Health Department immediately at 610-344-6452 or 610-344-6225 (after hours). The Chester County Health Department will conduct contact tracing if warranted.
3. **Exclude staff and students from school.** Schools should notify persons who are excluded from school activities, sports, extracurricular activities, etc. The Chester County Health Department will provide communication to be shared with those excluded. Exclusions should occur as follows:
- A. **Persons with confirmed measles:** Remain at home away from others (may not attend school) and away from all public places until 4 days have passed since their rash began AND they are fever-free and symptoms are resolving. The date of rash onset is considered “Day 0”. Persons with measles should be excluded from school, school activities, sports, extracurricular activities, etc.
 - B. **Persons exposed to measles:** The Chester County Health Department will work with schools to assess who has been exposed and the appropriate exclusion. Persons exposed to measles should be excluded from school, school activities, sports, extracurricular activities, etc. Persons requiring exclusion depend on several factors as follows:
 - **Persons exposed to measles and have ZERO doses of the MMR.**
 - An exposed person who receives one dose of the MMR within 72 hours after their initial exposure to measles, may return to school immediately. Proof of the MMR is required.
 - An exposed person who does not receive one dose of the MMR within 72 hours must be excluded for 21 days after the onset of the last known case in the school building.
 - **Exposed persons with ONE dose of the MMR vaccine AND person is household contact:**
 - Person must be excluded for 21 days. Chester County Health Department can release the person with proof of immunity.

Note: The following persons do **not** require exclusion:

- Persons with TWO doses of MMR vaccine (proof must be reviewed by the School Nurse).
- Persons with ONE dose of MMR vaccine and are NOT a household contact (proof must be reviewed by the School Nurse).



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- Persons with proof of immunity (proof must be reviewed by the Chester County Health Department).

Exclusion Communications:

The Chester County Health Department will provide communications for schools to share with persons who are confirmed to have measles or who have been exposed to measles. The communications will provide the person with the information about:

- Exclusion from school, school activities, sports, extracurricular activities, etc. to include the duration.
- Remaining at home.
- Self-monitoring for measles symptoms - All exposed persons will be advised to monitor their own symptoms during the exclusion period and to contact the Chester County Health Department if symptoms develop.
- Seeking medical care.
- Discontinuing exclusion.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact the Chester County Health Department at 610-344-6452 during normal business hours or email cdesk@chesco.org.