



# Department of Public Health and Human Services

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**Steve Bullock, Governor**

**Sheila Hogan, Director**

March 6, 2019

As of February 28, 2019, 206 cases of measles have been reported to CDC from 11 states. There currently are no cases of measles in Montana. Most cases in 2019 are part of a large outbreak in Clark County, Washington. Given the proximity of this outbreak to Montana, we may have travelers to and from the area, which could increase the risk of exposure to Montana residents.

Measles is an extremely contagious virus that can be dangerous, especially for young children. The measles virus can survive in a room for up to two hours after an infected person leaves the space. If exposed to the virus, anyone who is not immune is likely to get measles.

Public health authorities are recommending a proactive approach to prepare for the possible introduction of measles into our state. One important activity includes reviewing the immunization status of staff and students. While immunizations are required for students, unless a medical or religious exemption is on record, there are no immunization requirements for staff members.

People are considered immune to measles if any of the following are true:

- You are a pre-school age child with one measles vaccine (MMR – measles, mumps, rubella)
- You are a school-age child (K-12) who has had two measles vaccines (MMR - measles, mumps, rubella).
- You were born before 1957, or have received at least one-dose of measles vaccine.
- You have had measles disease (diagnosed by a health care provider and confirmed with a lab test).
- You have had a blood test that shows you are immune to measles.

If a case of measles occurs in a school setting, the local health department will work closely with the school to assess evidence of immunity for students and staff and determine potential risks of exposure to measles. Conducting assessments of staff and students now will save critical time in the event of a case impacting your school. If a confirmed measles case impacting your area is identified, recommendations may include post-exposure prophylaxis, and unvaccinated staff or students may be excluded from school until the risk of measles has passed **or** the individual receives a dose of MMR vaccine.

In the event a case of measles is suspected or confirmed, public health officials will help determine key response activities necessary to confirm the illness and/or guide the response to potential exposures. In addition, measles communications to students and parents/guardians should be coordinated with your local public health department to avoid potential issues with inconsistent information or instructions. Several instances of miscommunication have already occurred based on rumors and incorrect information being shared regarding “measles” cases. These issues can be avoided by speaking to your local public health department. Please be sure to have your local public health agency contact information readily available.

Up to date information on measles activity can be found at the DPHHS website. Visit [www.dphhs.mt.gov](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov) and select the measles banner to access our updates. In the event of a case in Montana, we will immediately update the website and issue a Health Alert Network (HAN) Advisory through your local public health department.

Thank you for your help to ensure that our students stay healthy and safe!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Holzman", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Greg Holzman, MD, MPH  
State Medical Officer  
Department of Public Health and Human Services