

# More measles cases seen in January than in typical year: CDC

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Spread driven largely by outbreak that started at Disney theme parks in California in December.

(HealthDay)—The United States has seen more cases of measles in January than it usually does in an entire year, federal health officials said Thursday.

A total of 84 cases in 14 states were reported between Jan. 1 and Jan. 28, Dr. Anne Schuchat, director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said during an afternoon news conference.

That's more in one month than the average 60 [measles](#) cases each year that the United States saw between 2001 and 2010, said Schuchat, who is also Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service.

"It's only January, and we've already had a very large number of measles cases—as many cases as we have all year in typical years," she said.

"This worries me, and I want to do everything possible to prevent measles from getting a foothold in the United States and becoming endemic again."

January's numbers have been driven largely by the multi-state measles outbreak that originated in two Disney theme parks in California in December, Schuchat said.

There have been 67 cases of Disney-related measles reported since late December, occurring in California and six other states, she said. Of those, 56 are included in the January count. About 15 percent of those infected have been hospitalized, she added.

Schuchat pointed the finger directly at a lack of vaccination for the Disney cases.

"The majority of the adults and children that are reported to us for which we have information did not get vaccinated, or don't know whether they have been vaccinated," she said. "This is not a problem of the measles vaccine not working. This is a problem of the measles vaccine not being used."

Public [health officials](#) are particularly concerned because the Disney outbreak comes on the heels of the worst year for measles in the United States in two decades, Schuchat said.

In 2014, there were more than 600 cases of measles, the most reported in 20 years. Many were people who contracted measles from travelers to the Philippines, where a massive outbreak of 50,000 cases had occurred, Schuchat explained.

The United States declared measles eliminated in 2000, meaning that the virus is no longer native to this country.

But measles still rages abroad, and can re-enter the United States to infect vulnerable people through travelers, Schuchat noted.

"Although we aren't sure how exactly this year's outbreak began, we assume that someone got infected with measles overseas, visited the Disneyland parks and spread the disease to others," she said.

The CDC estimates there are about 20 million cases of measles worldwide each year, and in 2013 almost 146,000 people died from the highly infectious disease, Schuchat said. For every 1,000 children who get measles, two to three die, she added.

Parents whose children are not vaccinated against measles should get them immunized, she said, and adults who aren't sure about their vaccination history should get a booster dose as well.

"For adults out there, if you're not sure if you've had [measles vaccine](#) or not, we'd urge you to contact your doctor or nurse and get vaccinated," Schuchat said. "There's no harm in getting another MMR vaccine if you've already been vaccinated."

A trickle of measles cases have always flowed into the United States as a result of travel between countries. In January, doctors have seen cases here linked to travel to Indonesia, Azerbaijan, India and Dubai, Schuchat said.

Measles is incredibly infectious, even more so than Ebola, officials explained.

"It's so contagious that if one person has it, 90 percent of the people

close to that person who aren't immune will also become infected," Schuchat said. "You can become infected by being in the same room as a person who has measles, even if that person already left the room, because the virus can hang around for a couple of hours."

Unfortunately, many parents are not getting their children vaccinated against measles.

"These outbreaks the past couple of years have been much harder to control when the virus reaches communities where numbers of people have not been vaccinated," Schuchat said.

**More information:** Visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for more on measles.

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