

Measles cases up in the US and globally

December 6 2019, by Rita Giordano

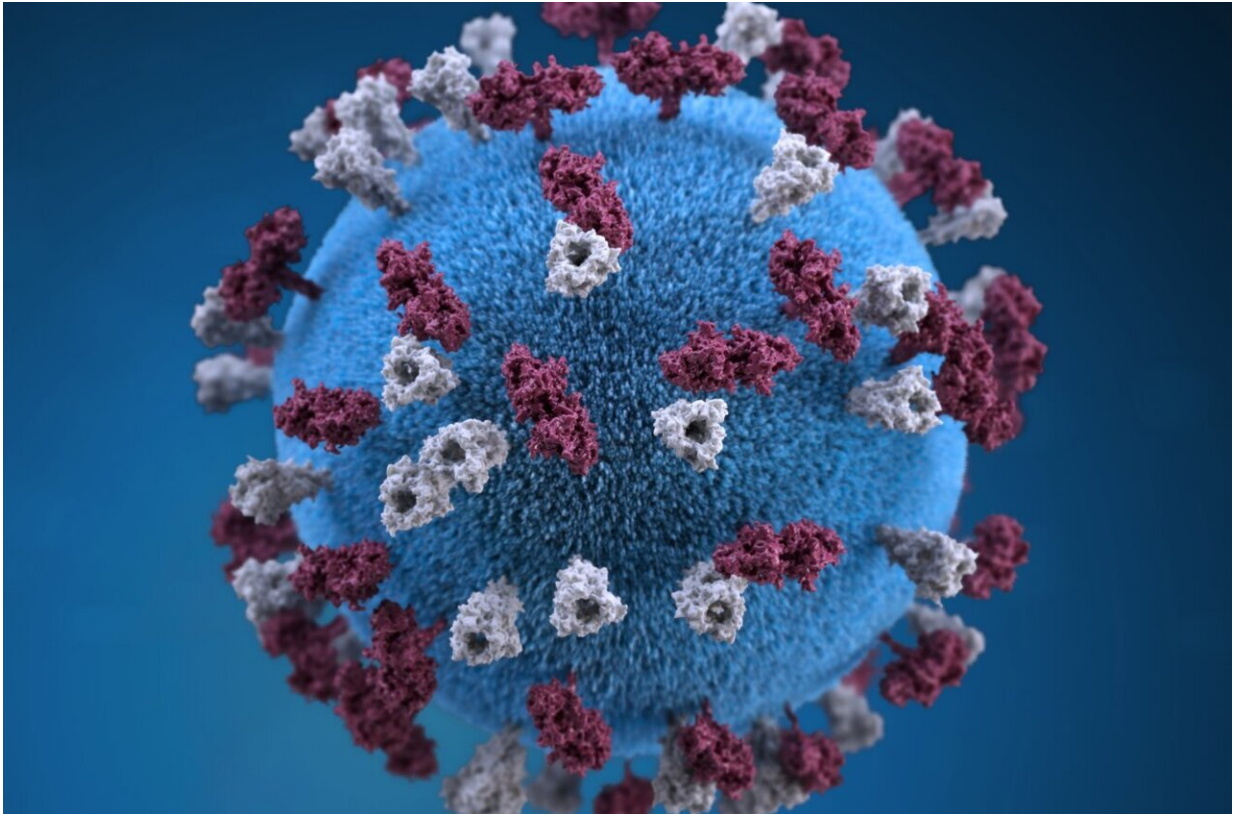


Illustration of the virus which causes measles. Credit: CDC/ Allison M. Maiuri, MPH, CHES

In a year when measles outbreaks surged in the United States and elsewhere in the world, the number of reported cases around the world for 2019 so far is more than 660,000 cases, a threefold increase over this time last year, according to data released Thursday by the federal

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

In the U.S., measles hit 1,261 cases as of Nov. 7, a 240% increase over all of 2018, according to CDC figures. That represents the highest number of measles [cases](#) in this country in 25 years.

The data included estimates that more than 140,000 people worldwide died from measles in 2018. There were no measles deaths in the United States, according to a CDC spokesperson. Global death figures for this year were not available.

"We've had a safe and effective measles vaccine for over 50 years," said Robert Linkins, CDC branch chief for accelerated [disease control](#) and vaccine preventable disease surveillance. "These estimates remind us that every child, everywhere needs—and deserves—this life-saving vaccine."

"When children go unvaccinated in significant numbers, entire communities are at risk," said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF's executive director. That's because young babies and people with certain [health conditions](#) cannot be vaccinated, and must rely on the "herd immunity" that results when so many people are immunized, outbreaks don't happen.

The largest [measles outbreaks](#) internationally have been in countries with weak immunization and health systems, according to the WHO.

However, in some nations, including the U.S., concern about the safety of vaccines, despite abundant scientific evidence that immunizations save lives, has resulted in some families refusing to get their children immunized.

An ongoing measles epidemic in Samoa has taken the lives of 62 people, including 54 children aged 4 or younger. Cases have climbed to about 3,880 in the relatively small Pacific island nation. The government told most public and private workers to stay home Thursday and Friday, and health teams were being dispatched to administer vaccines door-to-door, according to The Associated Press.

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