

# Colorado reports first measles case in four years in Denver airport traveler

December 21 2023, by Meg Wingerter, The Denver Post

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Colorado has its first confirmed case of measles in four years, and unvaccinated people who visited Denver International Airport or the Aurora campus of Children's Hospital Colorado may need to look out

for symptoms.

Vaccination is highly effective, so people who completed the sequence of the measles, mumps and rubella shot don't need to worry, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. In some cases, giving the shot to an unvaccinated person within 72 hours of exposure can prevent them from getting sick. While most people recover from measles without complications, it can cause brain damage or death.

The patient was an adolescent who arrived at the airport on Dec. 13. People who spent time on concourse A, bridge security, baggage claim or the passenger pickup area between 4:30 and 8 p.m. that day could have caught the virus.

Measles is highly contagious and can remain in the air for about two hours after a contagious person leaves.

The patient also was at Children's Hospital Colorado from 8:30 to 11 a.m. Monday. The hospital is notifying staff and families who were in the same area so they can monitor themselves for symptoms and get vaccinated, if necessary.

While too much time has passed for people exposed at the airport to prevent infection via vaccination, they still need to know if they could have measles so they can avoid passing the virus to others. Most people develop symptoms within two weeks of infection, though it sometimes takes up to three weeks.

Initial symptoms are nonspecific, and include fever, cough, a runny nose and watery eyes. A rash appears about four days after a person becomes contagious, and typically starts around the hairline.

If you or a family member are unvaccinated and visited one of the

locations where you could have caught the virus, you need to watch for those early symptoms, state epidemiologist Dr. Rachel Herlihy said. If you develop relevant symptoms, call your doctor or a local urgent care facility or [emergency room](#) before seeking care, she said. Showing up without preparations could expose more people to the virus.

"Anyone who is experiencing symptoms of measles should stay home unless they need medical treatment," she said in a news release. "People with signs and [symptoms](#) of measles should also not go to child care facilities, school, work or other [public places](#) to avoid exposing others to this very serious and highly contagious disease."

The last time Colorado recorded cases of measles was December 2019, when three children who had traveled to Denver from overseas had to be hospitalized for the virus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers measles eliminated in the United States, meaning it doesn't regularly circulate here, but unvaccinated travelers can pick it up in countries where it commonly spreads and bring it back.

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