

CDC, AMA issue calls to get vaccinated against measles

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Two of America's leading health organizations are highlighting a global rise in [measles](#) cases as yet another reason for families to make sure they get the measles vaccine.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Medical Association (which represents the nation's doctors), each issued advisories on Monday stressing the need for vaccination.

Besides a total of [58 known cases](#) of measles in the United States, "many countries, including [travel destinations](#) such as Austria, the Philippines, Romania, and the United Kingdom, are experiencing [measles outbreaks](#)," the CDC said in a [statement](#).

Ahead of the [summer travel season](#), "to prevent measles infection and reduce the risk of community transmission from importation, all U.S. residents traveling internationally, regardless of destination, should be current on their MMR [measles-mumps-rubella] vaccinations," the agency said.

Measles is one of the most contagious illnesses: It's thought that 90% of [unvaccinated people](#) who are in contact with an infected person will become infected themselves.

However, the standard two-dose measles vaccination is 97% effective in preventing infection, the CDC noted.

In the AMA [statement](#), organization president Dr. Jesse Ehrenfeld said rising rates of anti-vaxxer sentiment since 2019 have left Americans more vulnerable to measles -- a disease that was once nearly eradicated in the United States.

"As evident from the confirmed measles cases reported in 17 states so far this year, when individuals are not immunized as a matter of personal preference or misinformation, they put themselves and others at risk of disease — including children too young to be vaccinated, cancer patients and other immunocompromised people," he said.

"In fact, with lower vaccination coverage among kindergartners during the 2022–23 [school year](#), the CDC estimates that approximately 250,000 kindergartners are at risk for measles infection," Ehrenfeld noted.

Travel guidance

Children whose families do not have international travel plans should get the first dose of vaccine at between 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose between 4 and 6 years of age, the CDC advised.

International travel plans bring a separate list of recommendations:

- According to the CDC, unvaccinated babies whose families are planning to travel internationally should receive the first dose of the [measles vaccine](#) between 6 months and 11 months of age, prior to departure.
- Infants who already had a first dose of vaccine before their first birthday "should receive two more doses of MMR vaccine, the first of which should be administered when the child is age 12 through 15 months and the second at least 28 days later."
- Any unvaccinated child aged 12 months or older should get two doses of the MMR vaccine, separated by 28 days.
- Any teenager or adult "without evidence of measles immunity" should get two doses of the MMR vaccine, separated by 28 days.

Americans planning to fly to other countries should consult their doctors at least six weeks before they leave, if they are unsure about whether

they are up to date on their measles vaccines, the CDC [guidance](#) says.

Domestic outbreaks

Outbreaks are also occurring within the United States.

Officials have cited recent outbreaks linked to travelers who were infected abroad and had been eligible to be vaccinated, *CBS News* reported.

Those include a cluster of cases reported over the winter in [Philadelphia](#) linked to an unvaccinated baby. The infant had been old enough to get a shot of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine.

Another outbreak occurred in Idaho, which state health authorities linked to an unvaccinated adult who traveled to Europe, *CBS News* reported.

Most new cases in the past week have been in Chicago, where health authorities have been trying to stem an outbreak in a migrant shelter. New infections have also been announced over the past week in [California](#) and Arizona.

A spokesperson for the California Department of Public Health told *CBS News* there were four reported [measles cases](#) statewide, and that "cases have been linked to travel to countries with epidemics in the wake of decreased routine immunization."

Meanwhile, officials in Arizona's Coconino County also [announced](#) a new case on March 11. Three previous infections were reported this year in Arizona's Maricopa County, which includes Phoenix, but the new case wasn't linked to those or to international travel, *CBS News* reported.

Always unpleasant, sometimes fatal

Many people may believe that measles is just an uncomfortable but transient illness, but the truth is that it can prove very severe -- especially for kids.

Even in its "uncomfortable" form, measles is not easy, explained Dr. Aaron Milstone and Dr. Lisa Lockherd Maragakis, two infectious disease experts at Johns Hopkins Medicine in Baltimore.

Besides the hallmark rash, which begins on the face and can cover the body, measles can involve high fever, cough, conjunctivitis (red, runny eyes) and congestion.

Without complications, measles typically runs its course in a week. When complications do arise, things can get much worse, however.

Complications "can include ear infections, pneumonia and encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, that can lead to permanent neurologic damage and even death," the two doctors wrote. "On average, measles kills between one and three of every 1,000 infected children."

More information: Find out more about measles at the [World Health Organization](#).

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