



# Memo

**Date:** November 18, 2019  
**To:** Parish and chancery staff  
**From:** Maureen Smith, Director, Office of Communications  
**Re:** Response to Notice of Measles Case in Cobb County

---

St. Peter Chanel parish in Roswell and Transfiguration parish in Marietta both received notice Friday that someone with an active case of measles attended Mass at their location within the past two weeks. We are including the letter Transfiguration received from their health department.

We wanted you to be aware of the cases and that the parishes are partnering with their health departments to respond to them. Given this development and the onset of flu season, it might be a good time to remind parishioners and staff that they should stay home if they are ill and ensure your ministers are following protocol to prevent the spread of any illness.

The Georgia Department of Public Health distributes the attached Q&A about measles which may be helpful. Let us keep those infected and the health workers who are trying to prevent the continued spread of this infection in our prayers.

## **MEASLES QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

### **What is measles?**

Measles, also known as rubeola, is a highly contagious viral infection.

### **What are the symptoms of measles?**

Measles typically begins with a fever, followed by cough, runny nose, sore throat and/or red, watery eyes. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots may appear inside the mouth. Three to five days after symptoms begin a rash appears. The rash begins as flat red spots that appear on the face at the hairline and spread downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. Small raised bumps may also appear on top of the flat red spots. The spots may become joined together as they spread from the head to the rest of the body. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104°F. After a few days, the fever subsides and the rash fades.

### **Is measles still common in the U.S.?**

Measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000. This was possible thanks to a highly effective vaccination program and better measles control in the Americas. However, measles is still common in many other countries and may be brought into the U.S. by unvaccinated travelers. Keeping U.S. measles immunization levels high is critical to preventing measles outbreaks.

### **Who gets measles?**

People who have never received a measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine or who are not up-to-date on their MMR have the highest risk of acquiring measles. Particularly, children less than 12 months of age, who are not old enough to receive MMR, and immunocompromised persons have an increased risk.

### **What complications are associated with measles?**

Complications from measles are more common among children less than 5 yrs. of age and adults 20 yrs. of age and older and are highest in infants, unimmunized pregnant women, and immunocompromised persons. Diarrhea, middle ear infection, and pneumonia are the most commonly reported complications. More severe, but less common complications include inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), seizures and death.

### **How is measles spread?**

Measles is spread by air-borne droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and through direct contact with respiratory secretions or items freshly soiled with these secretions. Airborne spread can also occur up to two hours after an infected person has occupied an enclosed area.

### **Can a person who had measles get measles again?**

No. Permanent immunity is acquired after getting the disease.

### **How long is a person with measles contagious?**

A person with measles can spread it to others from four days before their rash appears to four days after it appears.

### **How long can a person have measles?**

Generally, the fever resolves after 2 to 4 days, and the rash resolves in 5 to 6 days. The length of recovery depends on whether other complications are associated with the illness.



# Measles Q&A for Parents and Caregivers

## How is measles treated?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Treatment for measles is mainly supportive. People with measles need bed rest, fluids, and control of fever. Children with complications need specific treatment and should be under the care of a physician.

## What tests are available to diagnose measles?

A diagnosis of measles should be confirmed through laboratory testing by your physician, and reported to the health department right away. This requires the collection and testing of blood, urine and/or throat samples. Results are most accurate if testing occurs during the beginning stages of the disease.

## Is there a vaccine for measles?

Yes. The measles vaccination is usually combined with mumps and rubella (MMR) or mumps, rubella, and varicella (MMRV)

- Children should receive two doses of MMR vaccine: the first at 12 to 15 months of age and the second at 4 to 6 years of age. (During a measles outbreak, children may receive the second dose as soon as four weeks after the first dose, no matter how old they are.)
- All adults who have not had measles or a measles shot should receive MMR vaccine, particularly if they were born in 1957 or later.
- Certain adults (such as healthcare workers) should receive two doses of measles/MMR vaccine to make sure they're protected.

## My child has been exposed to measles, what should I do?

If you think your child has been exposed to measles contact your doctor immediately. If your child has not been vaccinated, measles vaccine may prevent disease if given within 3 days after exposure. Immune globulin (IG) may prevent or modify disease and provide temporary protection if given within 6 days of exposure in persons who cannot have the vaccine.

## Is it okay to take my child to public places (i.e. grocery store, daycare, playground)?

If your child has been diagnosed with measles you should keep your child at home and away from public places until the disease has resolved (approximately 4 days after rash onset). All contact with persons who lack measles immunity, are immunocompromised, or pregnant should be avoided. Note: Call your physician's office ahead of time to inform them that you are bringing in a child that has possibly been exposed to measles or has measles. This will allow the office to take precautions to assure no other children are exposed.

## How can measles be prevented?

Routine vaccination is the best way to prevent measles. However, additional steps to prevent the spread of disease may include:

- Avoiding close contact with others who are coughing or ill
- Washing hands often
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough and sneeze into your sleeve
- Stay home if ill
- Seek medical attention if measles-like symptoms develop

November 15, 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

This letter is to inform you that a person who attended the 6pm Mass at The Catholic Church of Transfiguration on Sunday, November 10 has been confirmed to have measles. If you attended the 6:00 pm Mass on Sunday, November 10, **you may have been exposed to measles**

If you or anyone who attended Mass with you on that date fits into one of the below categories, please contact Public Health immediately for further assessment at 404-657-2588 or 770-514-2432.

- Infant <12 months of age
- Person without Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine
- Pregnant woman
- Immunocompromised person

#### **Instructions for Exposed Persons & Family**

- Children not immune to measles (either through the MMR vaccine or previous infection) and weighing less than 66 pounds have a limited time to receive medication to protect them from this exposure.
  - The last day to receive immune globulin to be protected from this exposure is **Saturday, November 16**. You may obtain this for free at:
    - Cobb & Douglas Public Health: 1650 County Services Pkwy Marietta 30008 today until 4:30pm or on Saturday, November 16 between 3:00– 5:00 pm

Measles is a highly contagious germ caused by the rubeola virus. The disease is very rare in the United States and the possibility of you getting this disease is very low. However, we wanted to let you know of the exposure.

Measles begins with fever accompanied by cough, runny nose, and red eyes. Two or three days later, the fever typically peaks, at which time, a red blotchy rash appears, usually first on the face, along the hairline. The rash rapidly spreads to involve the entire body within 24 hours.

Vaccination is the best protection against measles. Children usually receive the first mumps, measles, and rubella vaccine (MMR) at 12-15 month of age and the second dose at 4-6 year of age. If your child has previously been vaccinated against measles or has had the disease, the risks from this exposure are minimal. Adults born before 1957 are thought to have presumptive immunity. Adults born after 1957 are recommended to have one to two doses of MMR, based on risk status.

Sometimes the shot may not protect persons who have a severe immune system disorder such as HIV/AIDS, persons on chemotherapy, or women who are pregnant. If you or your child has an immune system disorder, please consult with your healthcare provider immediately and inform him/her of your exposure.

It is very unlikely that you will get measles but if you become sick with a fever, cough, runny nose or red eyes, with or without rash, before **December 1**, contact your healthcare provider immediately. If you become ill, we ask that you follow these instructions:

- 1) Please contact your healthcare provider immediately **by phone** and let him or her know that you were exposed to measles. If you do not have a doctor, you should call the Georgia Department of Public Health Acute Disease Epidemiology Section at 404-657-2588.
- 2) **DO NOT** go to the doctor's office, the hospital, or a public health clinic without **FIRST** calling to let them know about your possible contact with measles on November 10. Your healthcare provider or public health nurse will advise you about what you should do.
- 3) If you think you might have measles and seek medical attention, have your doctor contact the public health department IMMEDIATELY.
- 4) If you think your child might have measles, keep him/her at home and away from other people, especially babies less than 1 year of age or people with a weakened immune system.
- 5) Do not visit public places!

In collaboration with Transfiguration Church, Cobb & Douglas Public Health will continue to monitor the situation.

Sincerely,

Janet Pak Memark, MD, MPH, FACP

District Health Director Cobb and Douglas Public Health

# Measles (Rubeola) Fact Sheet

## What is measles?

Measles (rubeola) is a highly contagious vaccine-preventable disease caused by a virus.

## How is measles spread?

Measles is spread by air-borne droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

## What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles typically begins with a fever, followed by cough, runny nose, and/or red, watery eyes. After two to three days, the fever peaks and a rash appears at the hairline and spreads progressively downward covering the face, neck, trunk, and extremities.

## What kind of vaccine is given to prevent measles?

The MMR vaccine prevents measles and two other viral diseases – mumps and rubella. More than 95% of the people who receive a single dose of MMR will develop immunity to all three viruses. A second dose boosts immunity, typically enhancing protection to 98%.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all persons be routinely vaccinated between 12 and 18 months of age and receive a booster between 4 and 6 years of age.

## Who is at increased risk of becoming infected with measles?

- Infants who are too young to have been vaccinated (less than 1 year of age),
- Persons who have never been vaccinated,
- Pregnant women,
- Immunocompromised persons (these include persons undergoing cancer chemotherapy or other immune-suppressive treatments, transplant recipients or those with diseases that affect the immune system such as acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) or systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE).

## What about older persons?

Persons born before 1957 are generally considered immune because they probably had the disease when they were younger.

## Is it okay to go to public places (i.e., grocery store, work, daycare, school etc.) if I become ill?

No. If you become ill you should avoid all public places and contact your healthcare provider immediately. **DO NOT** go to the doctor's office, the hospital, or a Public Health clinic without **FIRST** calling to let them know about your possible exposure to measles. Your healthcare or public health nurse will advise you about what you should do.

Please contact the Georgia Department of Public Health immediately at 404-657-2588 should you become ill.