

# Health Advisory: Report Suspect Measles Cases Immediately

Minnesota Department of Health, Tues, May 7 10:00 CDT 2024

## Action Steps

**Local and tribal health department:** Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, FQHCs, convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

**Hospitals, clinics and other facilities:** Please forward to family physicians, pediatricians, infection preventionists, primary care clinicians, infectious disease doctors, and emergency department staff.

**Health care providers:**

- Report suspected cases of measles to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) at time of specimen collection: DO NOT wait for laboratory confirmation.
- Report by calling MDH 24/7 at 651-201-5414 or 1-877-676-5414 (toll-free).
- Order measles PCR for testing: serology alone (measles IgM) is not confirmatory.
- Be aware that the MDH Public Health Laboratory (PHL) provides free measles PCR with a quick turn-around time of 1-2 business days. MDH-PHL is the only lab in MN offering PCR that can distinguish between positive results due to vaccine strain versus measles virus.

## Background

Suspect cases of measles are reportable per the MN Disease Reporting Rule and must be reported to MDH **at time of specimen collection**.

In addition to MDH-PHL offering measles PCR testing, some commercial labs have started to offer PCR testing for measles. Health care providers using commercial labs for any measles testing must ensure immediate notification to MDH at time of specimen collection so that a preliminary public health investigation can start.

Waiting until after a positive result to report measles to MDH may result in missed opportunities to provide post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). The time frame to provide post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to susceptible persons is short (MMR must be administered within 72 hours of first exposure, and immune globulin must be administered within 6 days of exposure).

Suspect measles cases in persons who received an MMR within the 21 days prior to rash onset will likely be positive by measles PCR because of detection of the measles vaccine strain. When this occurs, health care resources are directed to follow-up on individuals who are not true measles cases. MDH-PHL is currently the only lab in MN that offers a PCR test that can distinguish between wild type measles and vaccine strain.

Testing for measles by PCR is the recommended method to confirm measles. In MN, Measles IgM is generally only recommended when there are issues obtaining specimens for PCR. Measles IgM false positives are common and should not be the primary method of testing for measles.

## HEALTH ADVISORY: REPORT SUSPECT MEASLES CASES IMMEDIATELY

Minnesota has had three cases of measles reported so far in 2024 (all earlier in the year), but cases continue to be reported around the country. Timely reporting of suspected measles cases is important for initiating a quick response and stopping spread.

### For More Information

- [MDH: Reporting Measles \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/report.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/report.html)
- [MDH: Lab Testing for Measles at the MDH Public Health Laboratory \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/labtesting.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/labtesting.html)
- [MDH Measles Pocket Guide \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/measlesguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/measlesguide.pdf)
- [MDH Reportable Disease Rule \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/reportable/rule/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/reportable/rule/index.html)

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/han\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/han)  
The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.