

NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ADVISORY

Increased Risk of Exposure to Measles

January 31, 2025

Background:

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) is notifying healthcare providers that at least four measles cases have been confirmed in Texas in the last two weeks, from Gaines County (2) and Harris County (2). Gaines County borders Lea County, NM. The Texas Department of State Health Services is investigating additional suspect cases of measles and whether any exposures occurred in New Mexico. Given the frequent movement of state residents across the state border, it is prudent to consider a heightened risk of measles exposure. While there are currently no confirmed cases in New Mexico, healthcare providers should be vigilant for febrile rash in unvaccinated or under-vaccinated patients of any age, especially those with recent travel or exposure to known cases such as those in Texas. It is important that your patients be up-to-date with measles vaccination, and critical for patients with suspected measles to be promptly recognized, isolated, reported, and tested to prevent further spread.

Recommendations for Clinicians:

Measles is characterized by a prodrome of fever, malaise, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis, followed by a maculopapular rash. The rash begins on the head and spreads down the body, and usually appears about 14 days after exposure, but ranges from 7-21 days after exposure. A person with measles is contagious from 4 days before the rash begins to 4 days after it appears. Measles is extremely contagious, and **NMDOH recommends that patients with suspected measles (fever and rash at triage) not be allowed in the waiting room with others.** Preferably patients are initially evaluated outside the clinic. If measles is suspected, immediately isolate the patient in a negative-pressure room.

If there is no negative-pressure room at your facility, ensure the patient is masked and placed in a private room with a door. Any room occupied by a suspected measles patient should not be used for two hours after the patient leaves, due to measles virus remaining suspended in the air during that time. Patients suspected of having measles should be instructed to isolate themselves at home through four days after rash onset. High-risk contacts, such as those who are pregnant or immunocompromised, may need additional evaluation. About one in five measles cases require hospitalization.

If measles is suspected, obtain **both** a serum specimen for IgM testing **and** a throat swab or nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport medium for PCR testing. **Notify the health department immediately for any suspected cases of measles by calling the Center for Health Protection, available 24/7 at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773).**

There is a safe and highly effective measles vaccine available, and healthcare settings should ensure that all staff have received two doses of MMR vaccine, or have laboratory evidence of immunity to measles. MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine is licensed for use in persons 12 months or older; MMRV (measles-mumps-rubella-varicella) vaccine is licensed for use in persons 12 months through 12 years old. One dose has a median effectiveness of 93%, while two doses have a median effectiveness of 97%.

Children should receive their first dose at 12-15 months, and their second dose at 4-6 years; the schedule may be modified in situations such as impending international travel or a local outbreak.

Additional Resources:

For more information about measles, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html> or call the NMDOH Center for Health Protection at **1-833-SWNURSE** (1-833-796-8773).

Tips for successful vaccine conversations with parents and caregivers can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/hcproviders/talkingtopatients.html>.

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving Important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the **“New Mexico Health Alert Network”** default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.