



# Measles Guidance for non-healthcare employers

**Purpose:** Provide guidance for non-healthcare employers to prevent and respond to measles infection in your workforce.

## Prevent:

**Develop an organization-centered infection prevention plan:** When an employer is not covered by a regulatory standard that requires an infection control plan, voluntarily developing a plan can help keep the workforce healthy. The plan should include guidance on:

- Well-ventilated workspaces.
- Regular workspace disinfection with [List D](#) EPA-registered disinfectants.
- Vaccination in the absence of a regulatory requirement to vaccinate.
- Exposure prevention measures in the event a workforce member gets measles.
- Return to work standards for workforce if they or a household contact gets measles.

**Vaccinate:** Vaccination is safe and effective for most people. One dose of vaccine is 93% effective, and two doses are 97% effective at preventing illness. Workers may be more likely to get the vaccine if it is available to them at no cost. Unlike the flu vaccine, the measles vaccine does not need to be repeated yearly. Once you've had it, you do not need boosters except in specific cases. Employees should ask their doctor if concerned about their immunity status and no occupational medicine options are available. Vaccines are available through:

- Many doctors' offices.
- Urgent Care centers (call to confirm).
- Local pharmacies (check with locations based on child's age).
- Your [local public health office](#). (call to confirm).

**Promote respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.** Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow, not your hands. Always wash your hands afterward. More information is available at the [CDC website](#).

**Encourage frequent handwashing.** If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.

**Encourage workforce to stay home when sick.** Measles is extremely contagious. [Symptoms](#) start with cough, runny nose, eye redness, fever, and progress to rash. The rash starts on the head and spreads down the body. A person with measles is contagious from four days before rash onset through four days after it appears. Measles infection can cause severe illness and death in unvaccinated children and adults.

**Communicate** with employees about the [current measles outbreak](#) and what you are doing to protect them at work.

## Respond:

**Be watchful** for employees who may come to work with signs and symptoms of measles. If measles is suspected, advise them to seek care from a healthcare provider, urgent care, or an emergency room. They should notify the healthcare facility *before* they arrive that

measles is suspected so care can be taken to limit further spread.

**Report** suspected measles cases to the health department immediately by calling the New Mexico Department of Health's (NMDOH) Helpline available 24/7 at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773). We can help ensure proper control measures are implemented. NMDOH will work closely with you to contact workforce who may have been exposed to measles.

**Isolate measles-positive workforce:** The individual infected with measles must isolate – stay at home away from others and away from all public places, including, work, social activities, sports, recreation events, all extracurricular activities, and public places like grocery stores and churches. The individual can return to work 5 days after the rash first appeared, if they are feeling well enough.

**Identify exposed workforce:** Exposure means sharing the same airspace as someone with measles, including in the two hours after an infected person has left the airspace. Risk for infection after exposure varies depending on a person's immunity status. For adults, proof of immunity includes:

- Written documentation of at least one MMR vaccine dose for people 18+ years old.
  - Note: Two doses are preferable. One dose may not be sufficient evidence of immunity for individuals with intense, prolonged contact to measles, such as to a household member.
- Laboratory evidence of measles immunity (positive antibody titer).
- Birth before 1957.

**Initiate post-exposure follow-up:** Based on immunity status, an exposed workforce member will need specific post-exposure prophylaxis, home quarantine, or may return to work immediately. Follow the guidance in table 1 to determine how to guide your workforce for follow-up.

*Table One (1): Exposed workforce follow-up*

MEASLES IMMUNE STATUS AT TIME OF EXPOSURE	PEP TYPE DEPENDING ON TIME AFTER INITIAL EXPOSURE	
	≤3 days (72 hours)	≥4 days
<b>Non-immune or unknown immunity status</b> (zero documented doses of MMR or IgG negative)	Give MMR vaccine.  May return to work immediately.  Get second MMR at least 28 days after first to protect against <u>future</u> exposures.	PEP not indicated (too late).  Home quarantine for 21 days from last exposure.  Two doses of MMR vaccine, given at least 28 days apart, recommended to protect against <u>future</u> exposures.
<b>Partial immunity</b> (one dose of MMR)	Give MMR vaccine.  May return to work immediately.	Give MMR vaccine.  May return to work immediately.  Monitor for signs and symptoms of measles for 21 days after last known exposure.
<b>Documented Immunity</b> (2 MMR, IgG positive, born before 1957)	No PEP indicated.  May return to work immediately.	

**Testing is only appropriate when a rash appears. Please call 1-833-SWNURSE or 1-833-796-8773 for more information.**

\*\*\*\*\* Template Employer-to-Workforce Letter below \*\*\*\*\*

Date: [insert date]

Dear [insert name],

This letter is to notify you that a person with measles was present at [employer name] on the following date(s):

- [date 1]
- [date 2, etc.]

Measles is a highly contagious virus that spreads through the air and respiratory droplets. The virus can remain in the air for up to two hours after a person with measles leaves the room. Children and adults who have not had measles or who have not received the MMR vaccine are at high risk of developing measles after being exposed. About 90% of people who are not protected against measles and are exposed to the virus will get infected. Children younger than five years old, adults older than 20 years old, and people who are pregnant or have weakened immune systems are at higher risk of complications.

### **What should you do?**

[Employer name], in collaboration with the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH), strongly encourages you to review your vaccination status. Children usually receive the MMR vaccine at 12–15 months and again at 4–6 years of age. Talk to your healthcare provider if you are unsure of your vaccination status, if you have only had one dose of the MMR vaccine, or if you have not received the MMR vaccine.

Protection provided by the measles vaccine is usually permanent. However, about three in 100 people who have received two doses of MMR vaccine will still get measles if exposed to the virus. Therefore, we want to provide you with information about measles, and the signs and symptoms to look for:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis/pink eye)
- Tiny white spots inside the mouth

- Rash (flat, dry spots)

- o The rash may appear red or pink on fair skin but may have no change in color on darker skin.

If you or anyone in your household currently has symptoms that look like measles, contact your healthcare provider. Notify the health department immediately for any suspected cases of measles by calling the Center for Health Protection NMDOH Helpline, available 24/7 at **1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796- 8773)**.

Anyone who has the measles should stay home and avoid contact with others through 4 days after their rash began. They should not attend work, parties, and/or other gatherings. They may return to work on day 5 after their rash began.

Those who were exposed to measles and who are unvaccinated should not attend work, parties, and/or other gatherings through 21 days after they were exposed. They may return to work on day 22 after exposure.

If you or anyone else in your household has a weakened immune system or is pregnant and has never had measles or the measles vaccine, talk with your doctor immediately.

If you have questions regarding exposure, symptoms, or measles in general please call **[insert employee health representative]** at **[employee health contact information]** or the New Mexico Department of Health Center for Health Protection Helpline at **1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773)**.

Best Regards,

**[insert employer signature]**