



# HEALTH ALERT

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## **Ongoing Measles Outbreak in Columbus, Ohio**

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) has reported that currently there is an ongoing measles outbreak in Columbus, Ohio. The first case was identified October 22, 2022, and as of December 20th there are over 80 confirmed cases. There is concern that there will be spread into neighboring states including Pennsylvania.

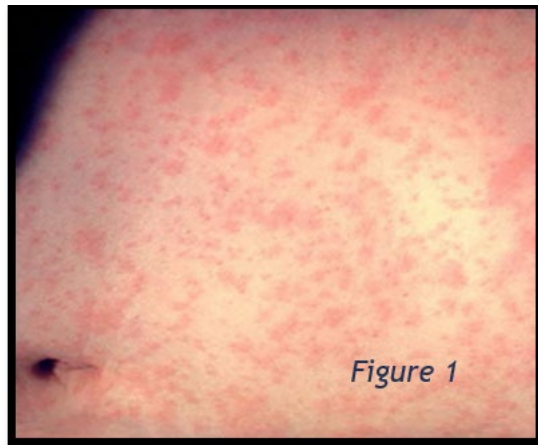
The measles outbreak in Ohio, combined with the predicted seasonal increase in internationally imported measles cases, is of special concern. In the United States most cases of measles occur in people who have travelled abroad and import measles into the United States. Typically, the number of these cases increases from midwinter through spring.

While most people are not at risk for contracting measles because they have been immunized or have had measles, the following groups of individuals are susceptible to becoming infected with measles:

- Anyone born since 1957 who has not received two doses of measles vaccine known as MMR, which would include infants too young to have been immunized; persons who were vaccinated with an inactivated vaccine, which was used from 1963 through 1967, and have not been re-vaccinated; and those who refused vaccination.
- Persons whose immune systems are compromised due to disease or medication.

## When to suspect measles

- Measles may be diagnosed in anyone who has recently traveled to an area with a current measles outbreak, with the following symptoms:
  - Temperature of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher
  - Cough,
  - Runny nose (coryza)
  - Red watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
  - Rash with flat red spots that can have small bumps lasting three days or more that starts on the face and then spreads throughout the body 3-7 days after symptom onset (*Figure 1*)



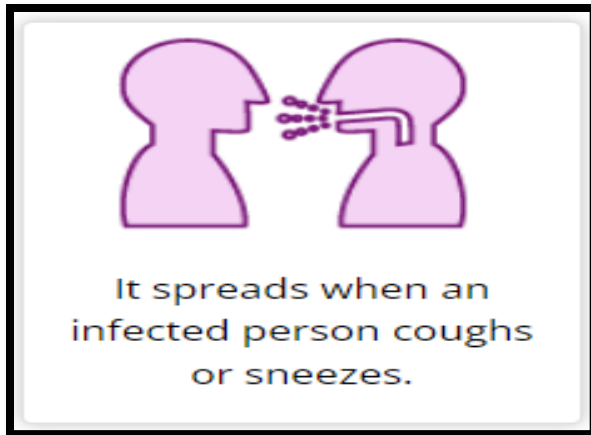
- Koplik spots, which are tiny white raised spots that may appear on the inside the mouth within two or three days after Measles symptoms begin (Figure 2)



- Other symptoms may include
  - Loss of appetite (anorexia)
  - Swollen lymph glands (lymphadenopathy) and
  - diarrhea (especially in infants)

### **How are measles spread**

- Measles is very contagious if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune can become infected.
- Measles is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes and another person breathes in the contaminated air or touches contaminated surfaces then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth.



- The measles virus can live for up to two hours in the air.
- A person who has measles can spread the infections or is contagious from four days before the rash appears. They remain contagious until four days after the rash appears.
- The incubation period for measles
  - a person who is exposed to measles will usually develop symptoms in 14 days, the onset may range from seven to 21 days.

### **Complications of measles**

Measles can cause serious illness in anyone, but certain groups of people are more likely to develop complications. The groups include:

- Children younger than 5 years of age
- Adults older than 20 years of age
- Pregnant persons
- People with compromised immune systems

Common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. Severe complications include

- pneumonia
- swelling of the brain known as encephalitis, which may cause deafness or brain damage
- death

A rare but deadly complication of measles is subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE). SSPE is a fatal disease of the central nervous system that develops 7 to 10 years after the person has recovered from measles. The risk of developing SSPE is higher for a person who was infected with measles before they were 2 years of age.

More information is available from The Pennsylvania Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- [Measles Identification and Prevention in Pennsylvania \(pa.gov\)](#)
- [Measles \(Rubeola\) | CDC](#)