

MEASLES GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS



MAY 2026

SACRAMENTO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

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If you have a suspected or confirmed case of measles within your school population, immediately call Sacramento County Public Health for guidance at:

(916) 875-5881

About Measles

HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS VIRUS

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can cause serious health complications. One infected person has the potential to spread it to 90% of people they come in contact with. The best protection against measles is two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine, which is highly effective and provides long-lasting protection against infection.

MMR vaccination coverage in school populations in Sacramento County is generally very high, reducing the likelihood of a school-based measles outbreak. The re-emergence of measles in our community increases the need for schools to be prepared to deal with a potential case or exposure.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Measles symptoms can include:

- High fever (may spike to more than 104° F)
- Cough
- Runny nose (coryza)
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis or pink eye)
- Rash (usually begins on face and spreads downward within 5 days of onset)

INCUBATION PERIOD

The typical incubation period is 7-14 days from exposure to onset of symptoms, but can be up to 21 days in some cases.

INFECTIOUS PERIOD

4 days before rash onset through 4 days after rash onset

HOW MEASLES SPREADS

Measles is very contagious and is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person can become infected simply by entering a room where an infected person has been, even if they left earlier.

PREVENTION

The best way to protect against measles is with MMR vaccine. MMR is safe and effective and serious reactions are extremely rare.

MMR VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

1 Dose: 93% effective

2 Doses: 97% effective

Suspected Case

IF SOMEONE AT SCHOOL IS SUSPECTED OF HAVING MEASLES

1. ACT IMMEDIATELY

If a person at school is suspected of having measles, swift action is imperative to minimize the likelihood of potential spread to others.

1. Mask the person (if tolerated)
2. Place in a private indoor airspace or bring outside if tolerable
3. Limit staff exposure

2. ARRANGE FOR PROMPT PICKUP WITH THESE INSTRUCTIONS:

If they need urgent or emergency care:

1. Call the medical facility before arriving so precautions can be put in place to prevent possible exposure to others.

If urgent or emergency care is **NOT** needed:

1. Return home
2. Isolate from others
3. Contact primary care provider
4. Await a call from Sacramento County Public Health

3. CONTACT SACRAMENTO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Immediately call Sacramento County Public Health at (916) 875-5881. We want to be notified of all suspected cases.

Confirmed Case

IF A MEASLES CASE IS CONFIRMED AT YOUR SCHOOL

In the event of a confirmed measles case among your school population, Sacramento County Public Health (SCPH) will guide the response. Here's what to expect.

INVESTIGATE TO DEFINE EXPOSURE

SCPH will work with your team to determine the extent of measles exposure using the following metrics:

INFECTIOUS PERIOD

4 days before rash onset through 4 days after rash onset

EXPOSURE SETTING

Any indoor space that the case was in

EXPOSURE TIME

From when the case arrived in an indoor airspace to 1 hour after they left the space

IDENTIFY CONTACTS

1. Identify those who were in the exposure setting during the exposure time.
2. Input their information pre-made line list provided by SCPH (see attached).
3. Items we will need:
 - a. Name & Date of Birth
 - b. Parent/guardian contact information
 - c. Location (classroom, office, bus, etc.)
 - d. Dates and times present
 - e. MMR status
 - f. High-risk indicators:
 - i. Immunocompromised
 - ii. Pregnant

Why this matters:

- There is a varying degree of public health action, depending on a number of different factors.
- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is time-sensitive:
 - a. MMR within 72 hours of exposure
 - b. Immune globulin within 6 days

NOTIFICATION OF EXPOSED INDIVIDUALS

1. Use the SCPH-provided template notification letter (See attached)
2. If any edits are made to the template and SCPH is mentioned, those changes must be reviewed and approved by our office before distribution

SCPH FOLLOW-UP

1. SCPH will contact exposed individuals to assess:
 - a. Immunity status
 - b. Risk factors
 - c. Timing of exposure
2. SCPH will provide recommendations on:
 - a. Monitoring (passive or active)
 - b. Post-exposure prophylaxis eligibility
 - c. Exclusion from school
 - d. Isolation/testing if symptomatic
3. If exclusion or quarantine is required for non-immune or high-risk individuals, it may last for the entire incubation period (up to 21 days from last exposure).
 - a. This means:
 - i. Students may need to be out of school for an extended period, especially if they are the household contact of a case
 - ii. Schools should be prepared to support home study or independent study services
 - b. SCPH will communicate any necessary exclusions directly to point of contact.

Exposure Outside of School

IF A STUDENT OR STAFF REPORTS AN EXPOSURE

In the event of a reported measles exposure outside of school, contact SCPH and we will investigate the validity of the claim.

If Exposure **IS** Confirmed, SCPH will:

1. Assess risk factors
2. Review vaccination status
3. Provide guidance to both exposed contact and school on:
 - a. Monitoring
 - b. Post-exposure prophylaxis
 - c. Quarantine/exclusion if needed

If Exposure is **NOT** Confirmed, SCPH may

1. Investigate further
2. Provide case-by-case recommendations

Accurate Vaccination Records

ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INVESTIGATIONS

The high effectiveness of the MMR vaccine means that measles infections overwhelmingly impact unvaccinated individuals. Having readily available and up-to-date MMR records for all students and staff allows for:

1. Faster identification of immune individuals
2. Faster response and clearance
3. More targeted outreach to non-immune or high-risk individuals
4. Less disruption to school operations

Templates

FOR INVESTIGATION AND NOTIFICATION

Download a line list template and notification letter template from the [SCPH Schools Team website](#).