

2019 Measles Outbreak, School Resources

El Tejon Unified School District

DATE 5/10/19

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The United States, California, and Los Angeles County are experiencing a significant increase in measles cases and many outbreaks. A number of Los Angeles County residents have recently developed measles and more cases will likely occur among people who have had contact with persons who were infected. We have provided the following information to answer questions that you may have about measles and to help you protect your family against this disease.

What is measles?

Measles is a disease that is caused by a virus. Symptoms include a high fever, cough, runny nose, red and watery eyes, and a rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. Measles can cause ear infections, diarrhea and serious illness such as pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling around the brain). Although rare, it can lead to death.

Most people who have never been vaccinated against or sick with the measles will get it if they have contact with someone who has measles. The virus can spread very easily when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also stay in the air and on surfaces for hours. So, you can be infected by being in a room that an infected person was in or by touching an object that they've touched. This is why it is so important for you and your children to be vaccinated.

How can you prevent measles?

Getting vaccinated is the best way to keep from getting and spreading the measles. People should get the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine if they haven't been vaccinated or don't know if they were. MMR vaccines are very effective and can prevent almost all cases of measles. Children should receive their first dose of MMR vaccine at 12-15 months of age and a second dose at 4-6 years of age. All adolescents and adults born after 1956 who haven't been vaccinated should also be vaccinated. International travelers are at high risk for measles; therefore, all family members, even infants ≥ 6 months of age should be vaccinated prior to travel, if not already immune.

If you or your child has not received the recommended doses, call your doctor to get the MMR vaccine, which may be covered by your insurance. Families who do not have a regular health care provider or health insurance that covers vaccines can visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/IZclinics/clinics.htm> or call the Los Angeles County Information Line at 2-1-1 for referrals to providers offering vaccines at no or low-cost.

If you think that you or someone in your family has been exposed to or has measles, contact your doctor's office right away. Tell them that you might have measles before you go, so they can take steps to prevent other patients and staff from being exposed. If your child has measles or has been exposed to someone with measles outside of school, please notify your school site.

Are measles vaccines required to attend school?

Yes. California law requires that students receive measles vaccines to attend school. Two doses of MMR vaccine given on or after the first birthday are required for students entering kindergarten and for transfer students entering the 7th grade. Currently, only one dose of MMR vaccine is required for students transferring into all other grade levels, but this is changing. After July 1, 2019, two doses of MMR vaccine will be required at admission or transfer for T/K-12 students.

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(California Health and Safety Code, Division 105, Part 2, Chapter 1, Sections 120325-120380). If there is a case of measles at our school, exposed children who do not have documentation of 2 doses of MMR vaccine will be excluded from attending school for 21 days or until an immunity test confirms they are protected. This is for their protection and to prevent the spread of measles.

Thank you for taking steps to protect yourself, your children, and our school against measles. To learn more:

- Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/measles/index.htm, www.cdc.gov/measles/, and www.shotsforschool.org.
- Contact your school site or
- Call the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Vaccine Preventable Disease Control Program at (213) 351-7800.

In Health,

El Tejon Unified School District

Addressing Concerns about Measles Vaccination

Measles is a vaccine-preventable disease. This means a vaccine can prevent people from getting and spreading this disease. The best defense against future outbreaks (more cases than usual) of vaccine-preventable disease is to keep vaccination rates high in Los Angeles County.

1. Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Most vaccines come with mild side effects, such as fever or soreness around the injection site. More serious side effects are very rare. You are much more likely to have serious health problems from the disease, than from the vaccine.

2. Do vaccines cause autism?

No. There is no proof that the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) or other vaccines cause autism. In 1998, Dr. Andrew Wakefield wrote a research paper in a medical publication called the Lancet. In this paper, Dr. Wakefield claimed there was a link between vaccines and autism. By 2010, the Lancet found no valid proof of his claim. What they did find was that Dr. Wakefield was paid more than \$665,000 by lawyers who wanted to show that the MMR vaccine was unsafe.

Also, there is no proof that thimerosal (a preservative in some vaccines) leads to autism. But to address parents' concerns, thimerosal was removed or decreased to very low levels in all childhood vaccines except for one type of flu vaccine in 2001. Not all flu vaccines have thimerosal.

3. Are vaccines effective?

Yes. We don't see many diseases in the U.S. because vaccines are so effective. For example, smallpox was eliminated around the world in 1977. We haven't seen polio in the U.S. since 1979. Measles was eliminated in the U.S. in 2000. But as we've seen recently, vaccine-preventable diseases can spread easily when unvaccinated travelers bring the virus from other countries into the U.S.

There is a small chance that vaccinated people can get sick during an outbreak since no vaccine is 100% effective. But, we would see much more disease than we currently do without high vaccination rates.



Key Points:

- Vaccination is the best way to prevent getting and spreading many diseases, like measles.
- Vaccination is safe and effective.
- Vaccination protects you and your community from serious diseases.
- The best defense against future outbreaks is to keep vaccination rates high in Los Angeles County.

For more information:

Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/measles/index.htm>

California Department of
Public Health
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/measles.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

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4. How do vaccines help prevent disease in individuals and communities?

Getting our vaccines keeps us from getting and spreading disease that we can prevent. Also, getting our vaccines helps protect people who can't be vaccinated for health reasons. Anyone who is not vaccinated is at greater risk of getting sick, such as babies that are too young to vaccinate, people with weak immune systems, and people with fatal allergies to the vaccine. When more people aren't vaccinated, the level of community protection drops and the chance of an outbreak rises.

5. What is the Department of Public Health doing to promote vaccination?

The LA County Department of Public Health works to promote vaccines by:

- Helping the public make informed decisions about vaccines through campaigns like Preteen Vaccine Week celebrated every February
- Providing materials, training, and advice to immunization providers to ensure that vaccines are safe, effective, and given to the right patient at the right time
- Helping schools and childcare centers follow school immunization laws and educating students and parents about these laws
- Tracking and reporting the number of vaccine-preventable diseases to quickly find and respond to cases and stop their spread

6. Where can you go to get vaccinated?

Call your doctor to get an MMR vaccine, which may be covered by your insurance. You may also be vaccinated at a pharmacy or at a clinic offering no or low-cost vaccinations. Call 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip to find a nearby clinic.

Want to learn more about vaccination?

Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health, Immunization Program

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/index.htm>

Immunization levels in California schools and daycares

California Department of Public Health

<http://www.shotsforschool.org/>

List of recommended vaccines by age

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/vaccines-age.html>

