



LOGAN COUNTY  
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**Public Health**  
Prevent · Promote · Protect

# Press Release

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## **WHAT IS MEASLES? SHOULD I GET A VACCINE?**

With ongoing media attention regarding measles outbreaks in our country and state, immunization against measles is encouraged. At this time, Logan County has no confirmed measles cases but parents should be vigilant for signs and symptoms.

Measles is a serious, highly contagious disease caused by a virus. The virus is spread easily through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes or by direct contact with infected nose or throat secretions.

Prior to widespread immunization, measles was common in childhood. In fact, almost everyone born before 1957 has already had measles. Currently, measles usually occurs in preschool-age children who have not had their measles vaccine or in school-age children and young adults who have had only one shot of measles

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vaccine. Measles occurs primarily in the late winter and early spring.

Symptoms of measles include a red, blotchy rash that starts on the face, along the hairline and behind the ears. The rash extends to the neck and then spreads to the chest, back, thighs and feet. A high fever - often as high as 104, runny nose, cough, and red, watery eyes are additional symptoms. The fever starts about 10 days (range seven to 18 days) after exposure. Infants and adults usually are sicker than children and teenagers. Measles can lead to ear infection, pneumonia, seizures (jerking and staring), brain damage, and death.

Measles is very contagious, so those infected stay away from work, school and social activities from the time when symptoms are first noticed until five days after the rash appears. Children who are not immunized will be excluded from school through day 21 after exposure to measles unless acceptable proof of immunity is presented.

Treatment includes bed rest, lots of fluids and medicine for fever and headache. Antibiotics do not help to cure measles or to prevent it. There are no anti-viral drugs for treating measles.

Measles can be prevented with a measles vaccine. The vaccine is recommended for children at 12 months of age. This shot is given as measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. A second shot of measles vaccine, usually MMR, is now required in Illinois for all children kindergarten through 12th grade. Anyone born after January 15, 1957, who has not had at least one dose of measles vaccine after 12 months of age or who has not had the measles should be immunized. Persons working in health care settings should receive two doses of measles vaccine (MMR) unless they have had the disease and, therefore, are immune. Women should not get the vaccine if they are already pregnant or if they plan to get pregnant within three months after getting the vaccine.

Tell your doctor if the person being vaccinated:

- Has HIV/AIDS, or another disease that affects the immune system
- Is being treated with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids
- Has any kind of cancer
- Is being treated for cancer with radiation or drugs
- Has ever had a low platelet count (a blood disorder)
- Has gotten another vaccine within the past 4 weeks
- Has recently had a transfusion or received other blood products

Any of these might be a reason for avoiding or delaying getting the vaccine.

The Logan County Department of Public Health strongly encourages those who have delayed vaccination to get vaccinated soon. The vaccine is provided to those children who have

insurance which does not pay for vaccines through the Vaccine for Children's program. Medicaid, Medicare Part B and D and Blue Cross / Blue Shield are also accepted as payment at the Health Department. Don't delay! Get vaccinated today!