

Measles, TB and Mumps Disease Investigations

Updated May 9, 2017

Measles Response

What is the issue?

The Minnesota Department of Health and local public health officials are responding to a measles outbreak in the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota. For more information and updates, visit the MDH [Measles website \(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/measles/\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/measles/).

Who is affected?

Most of the cases are confirmed to be Somali Minnesotan children who live in Hennepin County, but cases have been identified in other counties and in people of other races/ethnicities. Many of the cases were exposed in child care settings. Some were also exposed in health care settings or schools. For current information on who is affected and known vaccination status, go to the MDH [Measles website \(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/measles/\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/measles/).

Is this problem specific to the Somali community?

This outbreak is about unvaccinated people, not specific communities or ethnic groups. Measles is a concern anywhere you have significant numbers of unvaccinated people, such as ECFE groups, schools, etc. Unfortunately, Minnesota's Somali communities have been targeted with misinformation about vaccine risks and subsequently struggled with low rates of MMR immunization.

How does measles come into Minnesota?

Although measles is no longer common in Minnesota or the U.S., it is still common in many parts of the world, including Europe, Africa, Asia, India, and the Philippines. Most measles cases occurring in Minnesota result from a Minnesota resident traveling to and from countries where measles is common, and who are infectious with measles after arriving in Minnesota.

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. It can lead to hospitalization and in rare cases death. Measles spreads through the air by coughing or sneezing. Measles symptoms include a high fever, cough, runny nose and watery eyes, followed by a rash that typically spreads from the head to the rest of the body. A person with measles can pass it to others from four days before their rash appears to four days after it appears.

How is measles spread?

The most common way that measles is spread is through the air when someone breathes coughs or sneezes. To be exposed to measles, you have to be in the same location as an infectious person. Measles virus can stay in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area.

Who is at risk?

Most people in Minnesota cannot get sick from measles because they have been vaccinated or because they have had measles before. However, in recent years measles vaccination rates have declined in some communities and groups – often due to fears related to misinformation about vaccine risks. This decline in vaccination rates increases the risk – not only for those who choose not to be vaccinated, but also for those who cannot be vaccinated due to their health status (for example, a weakened immune system) or because they are too young.

How can I protect myself?

Measles can spread very easily among unvaccinated people, so the best way to protect yourself and your community is to make sure everyone who is able to do so receives the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Contact your health care provider to confirm that you and your children have received the MMR vaccine. You can also request vaccination records by calling 651-201-3980 or visiting [MIIC Immunization Records Requests \(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/immrecords.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/immunize/registry/immrecords.html).

What should I do if I think someone I know has measles?

People at highest risk of getting measles are those who have not been vaccinated. If a family member or loved one has measles symptoms, call your doctor or clinic. Keep the ill person at home and avoid having visitors until you have talked with your doctor or clinic. The doctor or clinic will tell you if you should come in for a visit.

What should I do if my family member or I have been exposed to measles?

State and county health departments are working to identify all places where people could have been exposed to measles. They are contacting parents of children who were exposed and are at risk of getting measles to provide them with instructions and steps to take to lower their chances of getting sick. People at highest risk for getting measles and with a higher risk for complications may be able to get immune globulin, which is a type of medicine given as a shot that has antibodies that can fight the measles virus.

What are health officials doing to help the community?

Stopping an outbreak means preventing sick people from passing their infection to others who are at risk. MDH is contacting people who may have been exposed to measles to get them treatment and keep them from passing the virus along to others.

MDH is also working to make sure as many people as possible are vaccinated. This includes informing people about the measles risk and partnering with Somali community leaders and health care providers to counteract vaccine misinformation.

Does the MMR vaccine cause autism?

No. Over 20 scientific studies show that MMR or other vaccines are not the cause of autism.

Tuberculosis Response

What is the issue?

The Minnesota Department of Health and Ramsey County public health officials are responding to an outbreak of tuberculosis in Ramsey County. The tuberculosis strains causing the illnesses is resistant to at least two first-line antibiotics normally used to treat tuberculosis, and therefore is considered “multidrug-resistant.” While this does not necessarily mean a significantly higher risk to the community, it does make the response more drawn out than would be the case for a non-resistant strain of tuberculosis as both treatment regimens of patients and those newly infected contacts are longer than normal.

Who is affected?

The tuberculosis cases are among older Hmong Minnesotans living in Ramsey County. Some of the patients shared common points of contact within the community, as well as similar points of exposure to tuberculosis in their countries of origin.

What is tuberculosis?

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. There are two phases: latent infection and active disease. Latent infection is not contagious. Active TB disease most often affects the lungs, but can involve any part of the body.

Symptoms of TB disease depend on where in the body the tuberculosis bacteria are growing. Tuberculosis bacteria usually grow in the lungs (pulmonary tuberculosis). Tuberculosis disease in the lungs may cause symptoms such as

- a cough that lasts 3 weeks or longer
- pain in the chest
- coughing up blood or sputum (phlegm from deep inside the lungs)

Other symptoms of TB disease are

- weakness or fatigue
- weight loss
- no appetite
- chills
- fever
- sweating at night

How is tuberculosis spread?

Tuberculosis bacteria are spread through the air from one person to another. The bacteria are put into the air when a person with tuberculosis disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or

sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected. Tuberculosis is NOT spread by

- shaking someone's hand
- sharing food or drink
- touching bed linens or toilet seats
- sharing toothbrushes
- kissing

When a person breathes in the bacteria, they can settle in the lungs where they may be controlled by the body's immune system and result in latent infection or they may begin to grow. From there, they can move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine, and brain. Tuberculosis disease in the lungs or throat can be infectious. This means that the bacteria can be spread to other people. Tuberculosis in other parts of the body, such as the kidney or spine, is usually not infectious.

Who is at risk?

Unlike measles, tuberculosis does not spread easily. Extended close contact is typically required for tuberculosis to spread. People with tuberculosis disease are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day. This includes family members, friends, and coworkers or schoolmates.

What should I do if I think someone I know has tuberculosis?

If you have reason to suspect that you or a family member have tuberculosis infection, you should inform your doctor or health care provider. They can do a test to see if you or your family member are infected, and can treat the infection.

There are two kinds of tests to detect tuberculosis bacteria in the body: the tuberculosis skin test (TST) and tuberculosis blood tests. A positive tuberculosis skin test or tuberculosis blood test only tells that a person has been infected with tuberculosis bacteria. It does not tell whether the person has latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI) or has progressed to tuberculosis disease. Other tests, such as a chest X-ray and a sample of sputum, are needed to see whether the person has tuberculosis disease.

What are health officials doing to help the community?

The Minnesota Department of Health and local public health officials are partnering with medical providers and leaders and organizations in the affected community to address this tuberculosis outbreak. Action steps include investigating cases to determine who else may be at risk, communicating with potentially exposed people, offering screening to exposed people, and helping people understand more about the risks and steps they can take to protect themselves and their community.

Mumps Response

What is the issue?

The Minnesota Department of Health is investigating an outbreak of mumps in the Twin Cities area.

Who is affected?

Almost all of the cases in this outbreak have occurred among students who attend the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. As of May 9, there were 21 cases in all.

What is mumps?

Mumps is an infection caused by a virus that can cause swelling and tenderness of the salivary glands in the cheeks and jaw. While generally not serious, mumps can have rare complications such as meningitis, inflammation of the testicles or ovaries, inflammation of the pancreas, and permanent deafness. It is not common to be hospitalized with mumps.

The most common symptoms of mumps include swollen glands in front of and below the ear on one or on both sides of the face, headache, and low-grade fever.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread by coughing and sneezing or through direct contact with the saliva of an infected individual. It can be spread by sharing items used by an infected person, such as soda cans, straws or eating utensils that may be contaminated with the virus.

Who is at risk?

People who have close contact with an infected person are at risk. Most people in Minnesota are protected from mumps through vaccination with the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. However, the vaccine is about 88 percent effective for people who got two doses of the MMR vaccine. This means some vaccinated people can still get mumps. We tend to see mumps cases occur in situations where people are in very close contact, such as among sports teams or in living quarters like college housing.

What should I do if I think someone I know has mumps?

People with symptoms of mumps should stay home from work, school, or child care. They should talk to their health provider by telephone before going to the clinic. Their health care provider might ask them to wear a mask or come at a specific time to reduce the chances of spreading the disease to others in the waiting room or other areas of the clinic.

If you have mumps, stay home and limit contact with other people until five days after symptoms started or until symptoms go away – whichever time is longer.

What are health officials doing to help the community?

The Minnesota Department of Health is working with local public health and University of Minnesota health officials to stop the outbreak. Health officials are following up on identified cases to determine who else may have been exposed and communicating with them about

measures they can take to avoid spreading the disease. Those may include checking immunization records and getting up to date on MMR vaccination if needed, watching for symptoms, washing hands well with soap and water and not sharing eating or drinking utensils. There is no specific treatment for mumps beyond supportive care.