

August 2019

Dear Parents,

Due to the recent outbreaks of measles in the United States, we are writing you to make you aware of some important issues regarding measles in New Mexico. If a measles infection is confirmed in your child's school, the New Mexico Department of Health will recommend that all children without proof of measles immunity be excluded from school and school activities.

Measles is one of the most contagious of all infectious diseases; up to 9 out of 10 susceptible persons exposed will develop measles. A single case of the measles can quickly spread, because people may not know they have the illness for several days before they begin to show rash symptoms. Patients are contagious from 4 days before to 4 days after the rash appears. Measles symptoms usually start with fever, cough, runny, and red eyes followed by a rash. The rash usually appears on the child's head and spreads to the trunk and arms and legs.

The measles virus is spread by direct contact with infectious respiratory droplets when the infected person coughs, breathes, or sneezes. The measles virus can remain infectious in the environment for up to 2 hours after an infected person leaves the area. The length of incubation from exposure to measles virus to symptom development is 7 to 21 days.

If there is a case of measles in your child's school and your child is not immunized against the disease, the New Mexico Department of Health may recommend that your child be excluded from school and school activities from 7 to 21 calendar days after the last exposure. If there is a measles outbreak in your area, unimmunized children will be excluded for an extended time until the outbreak is declared over.

To ensure that your child will be able to attend school or travel on school-sponsored trips in the event of an outbreak of measles your child must have received two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR). Documentation of your child's immunizations must be provided to your school nurse or administrator. If you need information about where this vaccine can be obtained at no cost to you, please contact your child's primary care physician, your local Public Health Office or the Immunization Program at 505-827-2356 or toll free 1-833-882-6454, and we will be happy to provide this information to you.

Sincerely,

*The Immunization Program*

**PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION**

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