



A RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY LIVING FROM THE  
GALLATIN CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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March 13, 2025

**To:** Parents and caregivers of students in Gallatin County

**From:** Lori Christenson, MPH, Health Officer, Gallatin City-County Health Department

**Subject:** Preparing for possible measles cases in Gallatin County

Dear parent or caregiver:

In recent weeks, public health officials in many states have reported a rising number of measles cases. As of March 6, 2025, 222 measles cases have been reported across 12 jurisdictions: Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York City, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington. Measles is highly contagious and can be especially dangerous for young children. While no cases have been reported in Montana, parents and caregivers can take steps now to protect their families and prepare for the possibility of a local outbreak.

With spring break in March, many travelers will be visiting our community, and Gallatin residents may also be traveling to areas with higher rates of measles transmission. It is important to recognize the symptoms of measles and monitor your child's health if you have upcoming travel plans or have recently returned from a trip. Measles symptoms typically appear 7 to 14 days after exposure and may include a high fever that can spike above 104°F, cough, runny nose, red and watery eyes, and a rash that usually develops three to five days after symptoms begin. Being aware of these signs can help with early detection and prevent further spread of the virus.

The best way to protect against measles is to get vaccinated. Measles is very contagious and spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can stay in the air for hours, and you do not need to be in direct contact with someone who is sick to catch it. If one person has measles, up to 9 out of 10 people nearby will become infected if they are not protected. Measles can cause serious health problems like pneumonia, brain swelling, and pregnancy complications. Even healthy children and adults can have severe complications. The measles vaccine is very safe, and any mild side effects outweigh the dangers of the disease. Getting vaccinated helps protect you, your family, and your community.

It is important to know that in accordance with the Administrative Rules of Montana 37.114.101 and Montana Code Annotated 50-2-118 and 20-5-405, students who are not immunized against measles and who are exposed to a known case may be excluded from school until the risk of transmission decreases, for at least 21 days. In the event of a measles case at your school, the Health Department will advise school officials to exclude staff/students from the school setting and school-related events who do not have documented immunity to measles.

Fortunately, school-age children who follow the routine childhood immunization schedule recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a dramatically lower risk of becoming infected with measles. Two doses of the MMR vaccine are 97% effective at preventing measles. Montana state law requires the measles vaccines for students to attend school or submittal of an exemption due to medical or religious reasons. Those at greatest risk of being infected with measles are people who have not been immunized.

Public health professionals recommend a proactive approach to prepare for the possible introduction of measles in our state. One important activity includes reviewing the immunization status of your child and family members. Individuals are considered immune to measles if any of the following are true:

- You are a pre-school age child with one measles vaccine (MMR – measles, mumps, rubella);
- You are a school-age child (K-12) who has had two measles vaccines (MMR - measles, mumps, rubella);
- You were born before 1957, or have received at least one-dose of measles vaccine;
- You have had measles disease (diagnosed by a health care provider and confirmed with a lab test);
- You have had a blood test (titer) that shows you are immune to measles. If you have proven immunity, that can serve as adequate documentation.

For these reasons, the Health Department advises all families to know their immunization status and make plans accordingly. Please ensure the school has a copy of your student's immunization record on file. Those wishing to obtain an immunization can call their health care provider or contact Gallatin City-County Health Department at 406-582-3100.

**If anyone in your household has a known exposure to measles, you should contact your provider, and/or the health department *immediately* for guidance on next steps.**

If you cannot locate your vaccine record, please use the following resource for locating records: <https://www.vaccineinformation.org/vaccine-basics/finding-vaccine-records>. If you are unable to locate your record, you can ask your student's health care provider about receiving another dose.

Additional up-to-date information on measles activity in Montana can be found at Montana Department of Health and Human Services website: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/measles>

Additional information about measles can be found on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori Christenson" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lori Christenson, MPH  
Health Officer