



NEWS FROM **ULSTER COUNTY** County Executive Jen Metzger

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Protecting Our Families and Community: The Importance of Measles Vaccination

THREE CASES IDENTIFIED IN NEIGHBORING ORANGE COUNTY

KINGSTON, NY - The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) confirmed three measles cases in neighboring Orange County on May 8, bringing the total to seven statewide this year amid a global and domestic increase in infections. The cases were confirmed by the NYSDOH Wadsworth Laboratory in Albany, and involve children under five years old who recently traveled internationally. There are **no** current cases of measles identified in Ulster County.

Because measles outbreaks continue to pose significant public health risks, the Ulster County Department of Health urges residents — especially parents of young children — to prioritize vaccination. Measles is a highly contagious virus that can be prevented with the safe and effective MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Nearly all cases of measles in the U.S. occur in persons who are unvaccinated or whose vaccination status is unknown. Only 4% of cases have occurred in persons receiving at least one dose of the vaccine, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Rising vaccine hesitancy and misinformation have contributed to an increase in cases in the U.S. To date, more than 1,000 cases of measles have been reported in 31 states in the ongoing outbreak, and three people have died — the first deaths from measles in the U.S. in a decade.

The CDC recommends that all children receive two doses of the MMR vaccine. The first dose should be administered at 12 through 15 months of age, and the second dose at 4 through 6 years of age. This schedule provides long-term protection and is the most effective way to prevent measles infection and its potentially devastating complications.

Adults born between 1963 and 1967 should review their vaccination records, if possible, as they may have received a less effective measles vaccine before the live MMR vaccine was used exclusively in 1968. A one-time booster may be recommended, especially for those traveling internationally or working in healthcare or education.

“The MMR vaccine not only protects you and your child — it also helps protect our entire community,” **said Eve Walter, PhD, Ulster County Public Health Director.** “By following recommended vaccine schedules and ensuring full immunity, we can prevent the resurgence of a disease that once caused widespread illness and death.”

“Measles is a highly contagious disease which can have serious consequences for young children and pregnant women,” **said Gina Carena, MD, Department of Health Medical Director.** “The measles vaccine is safe, and the first dose should be given at 12 months. Delaying this first dose until later puts families at needless risk for serious, sometimes permanent complications.”

According to the CDC, measles is a highly contagious and serious disease that can lead to severe complications, including pneumonia, encephalitis, and even death. Typical symptoms include a rash, high fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, and tiny white spots in the mouth. In recent years, measles cases have surged globally, with outbreaks reported in multiple countries, including the United States. Beyond its immediate effects, measles can cause ‘immune amnesia’, erasing the body's ability to remember and fight previously encountered pathogens, leaving individuals more vulnerable to infections for months or even years after recovery.

The Ulster County Department of Health provides vaccines free of charge for residents who lack insurance coverage. For more information on MMR vaccination guidelines or to schedule a vaccine appointment, residents should contact their healthcare provider. For additional information, visit <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/measles/>, and for any questions, contact the Ulster County Department of Health at 845-340-3070.

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