



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

GALE R. BURSTEIN, MD, MPH, FAAP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

March 2024

To International Travelers:

Measles was effectively eradicated from the United States in 2000. However, measles is a growing concern for public health and the medical community. Measles remains a common disease in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Measles cases and outbreaks have been reported in at least 17 states and Canada in 2024. Measles is highly contagious, and the virus can live for up to two hours in the air after an infected person leaves the area.

This month, the New York State Department of Health announced a first case of measles in the state outside of New York City. Measles is an incredibly contagious disease with the potential for severe symptoms. About 90% of unvaccinated people who are exposed to measles develop a measles infection, and one in five people infected with measles require hospitalization.

Many measles cases in the United States originate from unvaccinated or undervaccinated international travelers. If you are planning international travel, you may be at risk of a measles infection if you have not been fully vaccinated or have not had measles in the past, and travel internationally to areas where measles is spreading.

Vaccination is the best protection against measles. You should plan to be fully vaccinated at least 2 weeks before you depart. If a trip is less than 2 weeks away and you are not protected against measles, you should still get a dose of the [measles-mumps-rubella \(MMR\) vaccine](#).

Before you travel internationally, we strongly encourage you to:

1. **Check your destination** and CDC's global travel notices. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>
2. **Know your measles vaccination status.** <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/travel-vaccine-assessment/index.html>
3. Call your doctor, local health department, or [a pharmacy \(for travelers 18+ years\) or travelers' clinic](#) to **schedule an appointment for an MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine**. CDC does not recommend measles vaccine for infants younger than 6 months of age.
4. Monitor your health for three weeks after you return to the U.S.

Measles is highly contagious and can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. People who are infected can spread measles to others from 4 days before a rash develops through 4 days after the rash appears. Measles symptoms typically include:

- High fever (may spike to more than 104° F)
- Cough
- Runny nose (coryza)
- Red, watery eyes ([conjunctivitis or pink eye](#))
- Rash (3-5 days after symptoms begin)

continued

If you or your child gets sick with a rash and fever, call your doctor. Tell them you traveled abroad, and whether you have received MMR vaccine.

Do not travel if you are sick. Call your doctor immediately if you think you or your child have been exposed to measles.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gale Burstein", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gale Burstein, MD, MPH, FAAP
Erie County Commissioner of Health