

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Measles
Important Notice to Parents**

Clinical Description: Measles is an extremely contagious viral respiratory illness. Prodromal (early) symptoms include cold-like symptoms including a cough; runny nose; red, itchy, watery eyes; and a high fever (as high as 103–105°F). These symptoms appear prior to the development of Koplik's spots, which resemble grains of salt, in the mouth. A maculopapular rash (a smooth skin rash or redness covered by elevated bumps) beginning at the hairline spreads downward over the entire body 2-7 days after infection. The full body rash typically lasts 5-6 days. Measles can lead to serious complications. These complications include ear infections, diarrhea, pneumonia, encephalitis, and even death. Two to four days after the symptoms begin; a raised, red rash will appear on the head and spread downward to become a full-body rash, usually lasting 5–6 days. People with measles appear quite ill.

The incubation period is usually about 10 days from exposure to upper-respiratory symptoms but can vary from 7 - 21 days. The average time from exposure to beginning of rash is approximately 14 days.

Measles is spread from person-to-person by airborne droplets or by the nasal and throat secretions of an infected person. These droplets can remain infective up to two hours in the air. Direct contact with droplets, rather than airborne, is the most common mode of transmission.

A person can spread measles from four days prior to the appearance of the rash (approximately one day prior to the onset of respiratory symptoms) up to four days following the appearance of the rash.

To help prevent spread of the virus, students should never share items that may be contaminated with saliva such as beverage containers. All articles soiled with nose and throat discharges should be disposed of or cleaned. Students should cover their mouth with tissue when coughing or sneezing. If no tissue is available, students should be encouraged to “catch your cold in your elbow” by covering their mouth and nose with the crook of their arm and coughing or sneezing into their shirt or coat sleeve. Proper hand washing techniques should always be observed.

A live, attenuated virus vaccine is available in combination with the mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) at the age of 12 months. A second vaccination is usually given between 4-5 years of age. Vaccination is required for school entry in Maine. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to have their children vaccinated on time.

Individuals with a confirmed case of measles should be excluded from school and isolated as directed by the Maine Center for Disease Control. Students who are attending school but have not been immunized will also be excluded from school as directed by the Maine CDC.

Exposed pregnant women should be tested for measles immunity, if unknown, and should consult their healthcare provider.