

Protecting Yourself from Measles on College Campuses



Measles cases are on the rise on many college campuses across the country. College students: learn more about the disease and the actions you should take to protect yourself and your campus community.

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious disease that infects the lungs and breathing passages, such as the nose, mouth, and throat, and spreads throughout the body. Anyone can contract measles.

Measles symptoms can include a rash all over the body, coughing, high fevers, diarrhea, a runny nose, and eye or ear infections. At its most severe, measles can cause brain swelling, hearing loss, and death.

Why is measles spreading?

Measles is extremely contagious, and outbreaks are more likely when vaccination rates are low. This makes it easier for the disease to spread within communities, especially on college campuses, where prolonged, indoor close contact is common (e.g., residence halls, dining areas, and classrooms). Researchers estimate that communities are protected against measles when 95% of community members are vaccinated. However, measles vaccination rates among kids have fallen over the last few years.

In 2025, 93% of all measles cases in the U.S. were among those who were unvaccinated or did not know their vaccination status.

How can I protect myself, my friends and family, and my campus community?

Vaccination

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that people receive the full measles vaccine series by age six to prevent measles and its complications. The measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) and measles-mumps-rubella-varicella (MMRV) vaccines are both safe and highly effective. **Research shows that individuals who have received the full series of MMR or MMRV vaccines are 97% protected and unlikely to contract measles.**

For most people, the best way to confirm whether you're protected against measles is by reviewing your medical records. If you're having trouble locating evidence from a healthcare professional that you had measles and/or received the MMR or MMRV vaccine, ask family members who may have documentation of your childhood medical history. You can also check with schools you attended, past employers, and doctors or health clinics you previously visited.



Additional Guidance

Follow the guidance from your school's health center. For example, you may be required to provide proof of your measles vaccination if you haven't already.

If your school experiences a measles case or outbreak, it is critical to follow your health center's guidance. Doing so will help keep yourself and your friends, peers, and campus community members safe.

Use the chart below to determine what actions you should take to protect yourself against measles, based on your vaccination status and measles history.

Status	Action
I have documentation from a healthcare provider that I received two doses of the MMR or MMRV vaccine. ¹	→ No action needed.
I have documentation from a healthcare provider that I had measles previously.	→ You are considered to be immune to measles. However, you should still review your medical records and work to determine your measles vaccination status. If you are not fully vaccinated against measles or you're unsure about your status, talk to a healthcare professional about getting fully vaccinated.
I was born before 1957. ²	→
I have documentation from a healthcare provider that I received one dose of the MMR or MMRV vaccine.	→ Talk to a healthcare professional about receiving a second dose.
I have never received the MMR or MMRV vaccine.	→ Talk to a healthcare professional about receiving two doses of the MMR vaccine as soon as possible.
I can't locate my vaccination records, and I don't know whether I was ever vaccinated or had measles.	→ It is safe to receive another dose of the MMR vaccine, even if you may have received one or two earlier in your life. You should be able to test for measles and/or get an MMR vaccine at your school's health center, a local pharmacy, or a health clinic.

1 The MMRV vaccine provides safe and effective protection against measles, but it is only administered to people ages 12 months through 12 years. If you need to get vaccinated against measles as an adult, you will receive the MMR vaccine.

2 People born before 1957 were most likely exposed to measles before the vaccine was available and are considered to have immunity.

Where can I get vaccinated?

Some college health centers offer MMR vaccination. You can also search “measles vaccination near me” to make an appointment at a local pharmacy or health clinic. If you do not have health insurance, look into local clinics that may provide free or low-cost measles vaccines. You can also contact your health center for support in finding an affordable option.

What should I do if I'm experiencing measles symptoms or know I've been exposed?

No matter your vaccination status, notify your school's health center immediately. Your health center can provide guidance on how to best take care of yourself and prevent further spread.

Your health center exists to support you and keep you healthy. Don't be nervous to report your exposure and/or symptoms – doing so is a critical act of care for yourself, your friends, and your campus.

Sources

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