

Illinois and IDPH are Supporting City of Chicago and Cook County Response to Measles Cases

March 13 2024 6:10 AM



CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and other state agencies are moving quickly to provide vital resources to the City of Chicago and Cook County as they work to contain a measles outbreak at a City shelter for new arrivals. At the direction of Governor JB Pritzker, IDPH, the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), and Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) are mobilizing resources

to support the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) as they contend with eight measles cases that have been reported to date.

The outbreak in Chicago has emerged as the [CDC is reporting measles cases](#) in 17 different states.

“IDPH is working to coordinate state assistance to support our local public health partners as they contend with a measles outbreak that reflects an ongoing national rise in measles this year,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “While the vast majority of Chicago and Cook County residents are vaccinated for measles and not at risk, we strongly support the call from the Chicago Department of Public Health for all unvaccinated residents to get the measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine now. Measles is highly contagious and can cause serious complications for those that are non-immunized.”

“While we’re seeing new cases every day, this is not like the COVID-19 outbreak. The vast majority of Chicagoans are vaccinated against measles and therefore not at high risk,” said CDPH Commissioner Olusimbo ‘Simbo’ Ige, MD, MPH. “But those who are unvaccinated need to take precautions and if they’re exposed, quarantine immediately and connect with your healthcare provider. Above all else, get vaccinated so you, too, can be protected from this virus.

"Although the cases are in Chicago, we are tracking nearly 100 potentially exposed people," said Cook County Department of Public Health Chief Operating Officer Dr. LaMar Hasbrouck. "This investigation underscores just how infectious measles can be. We strongly encourage everyone to check their vaccination records and get vaccinated if needed."

IDPH medical, lab, and epidemiology staff have been working closely to support their counterparts at CDPH on measles testing, the establishment of isolation and quarantine solutions, including identifying space for quarantines, and helping to expedite the identification of vaccination records. The State is also assisting by providing medical team support, including onsite screening assistance at the shelter and infection control assessments at quarantine sites; medical assessments through a bi-lingual pediatric medical advisor; submitting specimens to perform confirmatory testing at the IDPH state lab; and providing laboratory testing supplies.

In addition, IDPH staff have worked to facilitate the arrival of a CDC Epidemiologic Assistance (Epi-Aid) Team from the federal agency’s Epidemic Intelligence Service that is providing assistance at the shelter.

Most residents of Chicago and Illinois were vaccinated routinely in childhood and are therefore protected. Of most concern are people who have not been vaccinated, especially children. MMR vaccine is available at most clinics, medical provider's offices and pharmacies. Children 6 months and older can get vaccinated. Under Illinois law, children 7 and older can also get the MMR shot at pharmacies.

According to the CDC, one dose of measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine is 93% effective against measles and two doses are 97% effective in protection from measles.

Symptoms of measles include rash, high fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes. After exposure to someone with measles, symptoms can take from seven to 21 days to show up. Individuals who develop symptoms of measles should contact a health care provider by phone or a "Mychart" message BEFORE going to a medical office or emergency department. Special arrangements can be made for your evaluation while also protecting other patients and medical staff from possible exposure.

Measles is more contagious than most other infections. Measles is easily spread through the air when someone coughs or sneezes. People can also get sick when they come in contact with mucus or saliva from an infected person. Measles can cause serious complications including pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain).

IDPH stresses the importance of ensuring everyone in your family is up to date on their immunizations. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination rates in the United States have dropped, increasing the likelihood of more cases of vaccine-preventable diseases. Individuals can protect themselves and their communities by doing their part and ensuring their families are up to date on vaccines.

For more information about measles, contact your health care provider, or visit the Illinois Department of Public Health [webpage on measles](#) or the CDC's [measles site](#).