



Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

A case of measles has been identified in northeastern Iowa. This is the first case in our state since 2011 and is a good reminder to make sure you and your family's vaccines are up to date.

The MMR vaccine is a safe and highly effective way to protect you and your family from measles. The case that was recently identified in Iowa was **NOT** vaccinated against measles. Measles is a highly contagious viral disease that can make children very sick. Measles is spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and can live in the air or on surfaces for up to 2 hours. It is so contagious that if a person is unvaccinated or has no history of immunity and they come in contact with the virus their chance of becoming ill is approximately 90%. There is no treatment for measles and approximately 30% of people who become infected with measles will develop complications.

If a case of measles is identified in your child's school, public health officials will require all unvaccinated students and staff to remain home until 21 days after their last possible exposure to measles.

Included with this letter is the "Measles and the Vaccine (Shot) to prevent it" information flyer for parents. If you are unsure of you or your family's vaccination status please contact your physician's office or the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health at 641-421-9300.

Thank You!

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Measles and the Vaccine (Shot) to Prevent It

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The best way to protect against measles is to get the measles-mumps-rubella shot (called the MMR shot). Doctors recommend that all children get the MMR shot.

Why should my child get the MMR shot?

The MMR shot:

- Protects your child from measles, a potentially serious disease, as well as mumps and rubella.
- Prevents your child from getting an uncomfortable rash and high fever from measles.
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child).

Is the MMR shot safe?

Yes. The MMR shot is very safe, and it is effective at preventing measles (as well as mumps and rubella). Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. But most children who get the MMR shot have no side effects.

What are the side effects?

Most children do not have any side effects from the shot. The side effects that do occur are usually very mild, such as a fever, rash, soreness or swelling where the shot was given, or temporary pain and stiffness in the joints (mostly in teens and adults). More serious side effects are rare. These may include high fever that could cause a seizure.

Is there a link between the MMR shot and autism?

No. Scientists in the United States and other countries have carefully studied the MMR shot. None has found a link between autism and the MMR shot.

What is measles?

Measles is a serious respiratory disease (in the lungs and breathing tubes) that causes a rash and fever. It is very contagious. In rare cases, it can be deadly.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles starts with a fever that can get very high. Some of the other symptoms that may occur are:

- Cough, runny nose, and red eyes
- Rash of tiny, red spots that start at the head and spread to the rest of the body
- Diarrhea
- Ear infection



Doctors recommend that your child get 2 doses of the MMR shot for best protection. Your child will need one dose at each of the following ages:

- 12 through 15 months
- 4 through 6 years

Infants 6 months to 11 months old should have 1 dose of MMR shot before traveling to another country.

Is it serious?

Measles can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children. From 2001-2013, 28% of children younger than 5 years old who had measles had to be treated in the hospital.

For some children, measles can lead to:

- Pneumonia (a serious lung infection)
- Lifelong brain damage
- Deafness
- Death

How does measles spread?

Measles spreads when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes. It is very contagious. You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, up to 2 hours after that person is gone. And you can catch measles from an infected person even before they have a measles rash. Almost everyone who has not had the MMR shot will get measles if they are exposed to the measles virus.

Where do measles cases in the United States come from?

Every year, unvaccinated U.S. residents get measles while they are abroad and bring the disease into the United States and spread it to others. Measles is common in other parts of the world, including countries in Europe, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Africa. Worldwide, about 20 million people get measles each year. When people with measles travel into the United States, they can spread the disease to unvaccinated people including children too young to be vaccinated.

How many measles cases are there in the United States each year?

From year to year, measles cases can range from roughly less than 100 to a couple hundred. However, in some years like 2014, there were more measles cases than usual. In 2014, 667 people from 27 states were reported as having measles. Most of these people got measles in the United States after being exposed to someone who got measles while in another country.

Where can I learn more about the MMR shot and my child?

To learn more about the MMR shot, talk to your child's doctor, call 1-800-CDC-INFO, or visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend children receive all vaccines according to the recommended schedule.