

# Measles

## GUIDANCE FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

### Purpose

This document is intended to provide guidance for colleges and universities on measles preparedness, to ensure readiness in the event that a case of measles is identified in your school building or campus. Measles in colleges and universities can affect students' health and disrupt learning. A single case of measles is a public health priority. Vaccination is the best protection against measles.

### College Immunization Requirements

College students are required to be immunized against several diseases in North Carolina by GS 130A-152 and G.S 130A-155.1.

General Statute 130A-155.1. (a) requires persons attending a college or university, whether public, private or religious, to present a Certificate of Immunization or a record of immunization from a high school located in North Carolina. The registrar of the college or university is responsible for assuring the required immunizations have been received by all new (undergraduate and graduate) students enrolling in college each fall. The statute applies to all students, except students residing off-campus **and** registering for any combination of:

- Off-campus courses
- Evening courses (classes beginning after 5 p.m.)
- Weekend courses
- No more than four-day credit hours in on-campus courses

### Measles-specific vaccination requirements

#### For College Entry

- Two doses of MMR, with some exceptions

#### For Presumptive Evidence of Immunity (Post- Exposure)

People are considered immune if they have any of the following:

1. Written documentation of adequate vaccination, including:
  - One or more doses of a measles-containing vaccine administered on or after the first birthday is sufficient for most individuals to be considered immune after exposure.
    - Note: Two doses of a measles-containing vaccine, administered at least 28 days apart, is required by North Carolina state law for school-age children. Adults at high risk, including college students, health care workers and international travelers are also recommended to have two doses.
2. Laboratory evidence of immunity; or
3. Birth before 1957; or
4. Previous laboratory confirmation of disease.

**Persons who do not meet the above criteria are considered susceptible and should be vaccinated unless contraindicated.**

### Proactive Actions for College and Universities

#### Create a list of students who do not have appropriate documentation of immunity.

Students without evidence of immunity cannot attend class and other school-related activities if they are exposed to measles and do not receive post-exposure prophylaxis within the recommended timeframe. See the Immediate Actions section below for quarantine and isolation guidance.

#### Recommend to faculty and staff to have their evidence of immunity readily available.

Faculty and staff without evidence of immunity will also need to stay home from work if exposed to measles. To prevent unnecessary absences, encourage faculty and staff to have their [immunization records](#) or other evidence of immunity readily available for review if requested.



## Communicate broadly with all students, parents and staff, reminding them of immunization recommendations.

Share the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations. One dose of MMR vaccine is 93% effective at preventing measles, and two doses of MMR vaccine are 97% effective. If your college/university offers student health services and you are able to vaccinate, communicate vaccine availability to students and staff. Measles vaccines are also available from:

- [Your local health department](#)
- Urgent care centers (call to confirm)
- Local pharmacies (check with locations)
- Some doctor's offices (check with locations)

## Take respiratory disease prevention measures.

- Promote respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. Measles is primarily airborne.
- Encourage frequent handwashing. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, tables and counters on a routine basis.
- Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick.

## Review the signs and symptoms of measles.

- High fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Conjunctivitis
- Rash that spreads from the head to the lower extremities

## Immediate Actions if Measles Is Suspected or Confirmed

Quick actions can prevent further spread of disease to others at school and in the community.

### Contact your local health department. Help the sick person isolate and contact their health care provider.

- Notify your [local health department](#). If unavailable, notify the state Epidemiologist On-Call at 919-733-3419, available 24/7.
- People experiencing symptoms consistent with measles should immediately isolate in a private area until they can seek health care. The person should notify the health care facility before arrival so they can take precautions to limit exposure.

### Communicate with students, families and staff.

If a measles case is confirmed, local and/or state public health will work closely with you to contact students and staff who may have been exposed to measles.



## Isolate students who have tested positive for measles.

### Isolate and monitor ill students while they are considered infectious to reduce transmission of disease on campus.

Measles is an extremely infectious airborne disease and a student or staff member with suspected illness must not share airspace with others. The virus can stay in room air for two hours after an infectious person has been in it.

- The student or staff member who is infected with measles must isolate, meaning they must stay at home, away from others and away from all public places including classes, extracurriculars, work and social activities.
- Isolation lasts until four days have passed since the onset of rash.
- Students that have the option should consider returning home during the isolation period if they can do so without exposing other non-immune people. Public transportation such as buses, trains, airplanes, etc. is not allowed.
- For students who cannot return home, plan on how accommodations will be made for isolation.
  - Identify potential housing accommodation for ill students prior to an outbreak.
  - Students should be housed in a private room with a separate bathroom. For measles, this should be in a separate residence away from the general population.
  - Plan for meals and other necessities that will need to be provided. For measles, only staff with evidence of immunity to measles should deliver meals or other supplies.
  - Staff should communicate with the ill student on a regular basis to assess their well-being.



### Exposed students and staff: monitoring and quarantine

- People with measles are infectious four days before rash onset until four days after rash onset. This is the infectious period when they can expose others to the virus. People who are exposed to measles include:
  - Anyone who was in the same room as the ill person during the infectious period
  - Anyone in the room up to two hours after the ill person left the room during the infectious period
  - Anyone living in the same dorm/dorm suite as the ill person
  - Anyone who was in common areas (hallways, cafeterias, residence hall common spaces, etc.) as the ill person should consider themselves exposed

**\*All students and staff exposed to measles need to monitor themselves for symptoms for 21 days.**

**Students and staff who were exposed to measles and do not have evidence of immunity need to stay home from classes and quarantine.** The quarantine period may range from 21-28 days. However, people who get the measles vaccine within 72 hours of initial exposure may return to normal activities.

### More Resources

For questions related to quarantine and isolation requirements, case reporting, exposures, contact investigation or environmental cleaning, **please reach out to your local/regional health department as your point of contact.** If you are unable to reach your local health department, call the North Carolina Epidemiologist On-Call (available 24/7) at 919-733-3419. The North Carolina Immunization Program Nurse On-Call is available during business hours at 919-707-5575.

- [DHHS Measles \(Rubeola\) Webpage](#)
- [3/3/2025 NC DHHS Memo: Increase in Measles Cases in the United States](#)
- Measles Basic Information Handout in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#), and [Ukrainian](#)
- [CDC Clinical Overview of Measles](#)
- School Infection Prevention Guidance from CDC
- [North Carolina Communicable Disease Manual – Measles resources](#)

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