



Pima County Health Department Measles Update

March 18, 2025 | Dr. Theresa Cullen, MD, MS



2025 US Cases and Outbreaks

January 1- March 14, 2025

- There are 3 measles outbreaks in the US, with the highest number of measles cases reported in West Texas and New Mexico.
- 301 confirmed measles cases were reported across 15 US jurisdictions, with 93% of cases linked to 3 outbreaks compared to 285 cases for all of 2024.
- Measles typically kills 1 to 3 of every 1,000 cases.
- There have been 2 reported deaths, both among unvaccinated individuals.
 - Prior to the current US outbreak, the last US reported death caused by measles was in 2015.

Local Measles Update as of March 14, 2025

- There are currently no reported cases of measles in Pima County.
 - The last reported measles case in Pima County was in 2019 in an unvaccinated returning international traveler.
 - A rapid response was successfully conducted and there were no additional cases.
- There have been no reported measles cases in Arizona in 2025, though there were 5 reported cases of measles in 2024.

Protecting Against Infection

- The best way to prevent measles spread is through vaccination.
- Community protection ('herd immunity') requires a vaccination rate of 95%.
- For children, two doses of a measles-containing vaccine (MMR) is generally recommended.
- Unvaccinated or nonimmune adults should receive either 1 or 2 doses of the MMR vaccine depending on their risk factors.
- In Arizona, two doses of MMR are required before entering kindergarten.
- Individuals may be exempt from state school vaccination requirements for personal, medical or religious reasons.

MMR Vaccine Safety

- The MMR vaccine has been distributed since 1971 and is monitored for safety.
 - The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) is a national safety monitoring system in the U.S. that collects and analyzes reports of possible side effects after vaccination.
 - VAERS is an early warning system, not a confirmation that a vaccine caused an event. Reports can be made by anyone and are not required to be submitted through a healthcare provider.
 - Since 2019, there have been 17 reports from Arizona made to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) about MMR vaccines.
 - VAERS information can be coincidental and does not necessarily determine causation.

Common Misconceptions

- **"Vitamin A prevents measles"**
 - Vitamin A does not prevent measles. The CDC recently advised that Vitamin A *may* be considered by a clinician when treating a patient hospitalized with measles. This is based upon treatment data from countries with widespread famine and malnutrition. Vitamin A deficiency is exceedingly rare in the United States.
- **"There are homeopathic remedies to prevent measles"**
 - There is no scientific evidence that homeopathic treatments, essential oils, or herbal remedies prevent or cure measles.
- **"Natural immunity is better than the vaccine"**
 - While recovering from measles does provide immunity, it comes at a high risk of severe complications, including pneumonia, brain swelling (encephalitis), and death.
- **"Breastfeeding alone protects babies from measles"**
 - While breast milk provides some antibodies, it does not offer complete protection against measles. Routine vaccination starting at 12 months is the best protection.
- **"The MMR vaccine causes autism"**
 - Dozens of scientific studies have confirmed that the MMR vaccine does not cause autism.

PCHD Preparation

- Monitoring community protection through MMR vaccine rates.
- Should a suspect case be reported, timely epidemiological monitoring, case investigation, contact tracing and reporting.
- Provider information and advisories sent through the *Pima County Provider Health Hub*.
- Coordination with other county departments, AzDHS and healthcare systems for support as needed.
- Recommended hospitals review their response plans for response.
- Conducted measles preparedness drill in February 2025.
- Established a Virtual Emergency Operation Center activation threshold if 1 suspected or confirmed measles case.

Support for Children, Parents, Schools, and Child Care Facilities

- Sharing updated information and guidance with all Pima County K-12 schools and childcare facilities.
- Providing letters for schools and childcare facilities to distribute to parents/guardians regarding measles and available resources.
- In process of offering mobile MMR vaccination events at schools with low MMR vaccination rates in Pima County.