



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Division, School Health Bureau

2110 Washington Blvd., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Arlington, VA 22204  
TEL 703-228-1651 FAX 703-228-5850

Dear Arlington Public Schools (APS) Families and Staff,

Date: 03/03/2026

Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has reported an increase in cases of measles in Northern Virginia. Although VDH has not yet identified a measles outbreak or evidence of community spread in Virginia, this increase is a good reminder of the importance of vaccines in protecting our communities. Measles is a virus that spreads very easily. If one person has measles, 9 out of 10 people around them will get it if they have not been vaccinated or are not immune.

To help protect your families and your student(s) and prevent the spread of illness, please read the following information:

### **HOW DOES MEASLES SPREAD?**

Measles spreads very easily through the air when a person sick with measles breathes, coughs, or sneezes. The virus can stay in the air and make you sick for up to 2 hours after someone with measles has left the room.

### **WHAT ARE MEASLES SYMPTOMS?**

Common symptoms include fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat, and red, watery eyes. These symptoms start anywhere between 7-21 days after being exposed to someone with measles. After 3–7 days of these symptoms, a red rash develops that usually begins on the face and then spreads to the rest of the body. A person with measles can spread the disease 4 days before the rash appears until 4 days after.

One in five measles patients will require hospitalization. Some people, especially very young children who have not yet been vaccinated, are at high risk for serious complications. These may include lung infection (pneumonia), brain inflammation (encephalitis), deafness, and even death.

### **HOW CAN I PREVENT MEASLES?**

The best way to prevent measles is by getting vaccinated!

You can prevent measles with a vaccine that provides protection against 3 diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). The MMR vaccine is proven to be very safe and effective.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children should receive two doses of the MMR vaccine — the first at 12 to 15 months of age and the second between 4 and 6 years of age. The second dose may be given earlier, if needed, if it is administered at least 28 days after the first dose. One MMR dose is 93% effective against measles, and two doses are 97% effective against measles. Most children become eligible for their second MMR dose upon their fourth birthday and are encouraged to receive it at that time. Please check with your healthcare provider or school health nurse for guidance.

Children, teenagers and adults who have not been vaccinated and have no documented evidence of ever having measles should also get the MMR, including before traveling outside the United States.

Anyone who has received two doses of a measles-containing vaccine after 12 months of age, previously had measles or laboratory proof of immunity or infection, or was born before 1957, does not need to take any action, as they are considered protected.



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### **HOW CAN I GET THE MMR VACCINE?**

- Contact your healthcare provider or school nurse.
- Come to one of Arlington County Public Health Division's clinics. Visit [Immunization Clinic – Official Website of Arlington County Virginia Government](#) for more information about times, locations, and costs.

### **WHAT IF SYMPTOMS DEVELOP?**

- Keep your child at home, or stay at home yourself, if you are sick.
- Contact your healthcare provider before going in for medical care. Do not just “walk in” to the office.
- When speaking with the provider, let them know that you suspect measles so they can protect staff and other patients when you come into their office or clinic.
- Avoid public areas and public transportation.
- Notify the school and school clinic of your/your child's illness

### **REMEMBER!**

- Measles is very easy to catch and spreads to anyone who has not gotten the MMR vaccine or has not had measles.
- Anyone with possible measles should stay home and let a healthcare clinic or provider know that they suspect measles before going in for medical care.

### **WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

You can find more information about measles in our area at [Measles – Official Website of Arlington County Virginia Government](#). General information on measles from the CDC, including information on immunization and [international travel](#), is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>

Sincerely,

Sarah N. Bell, MPH, BSN, RN  
School Health Bureau Chief