Measles Guidance for Clinicians

The Indiana Department of Health has confirmed measles cases throughout the state. Clinicians should watch for additional cases and report suspected measles immediately.

When to suspect measles

Consider measles in a patient with:

- Generalized maculopapular rash
- Fever of 101°F or higher
- Cough, coryza, or conjunctivitis
- Possible exposure during the 21 days before symptoms began, including:
    - Known exposure to measles
    - Travel to an area with known measles cases
    - Contact with someone who had fever and rash, especially after travel

Measles often begins with fever, malaise, cough, coryza, or conjunctivitis. Koplik spots may appear. The rash usually begins near the hairline and spreads down the body.

Report suspected cases immediately

Indiana providers, hospitals, and laboratories must report measles as soon as it is suspected, regardless of where testing will be performed.

- Business hours: 317-233-7125
- After hours: 317-233-1325

Isolate the patient

- Mask the patient, if tolerated.
- Place the patient in an airborne infection isolation room.
- If one is not available, place the patient in a private room with the door closed.
- Notify infection prevention staff.
- Use airborne precautions, including an N95 respirator.
- Limit care to healthcare workers with evidence of measles immunity.
- Keep the room vacant for at least 2 hours after the patient leaves. Disinfect it before another patient uses it.
- Notify the receiving facility before transferring the patient.

Testing

Call IDOH at 317-233-1325 before sending specimens to the IDOH Laboratories. Prior authorization is required.

Collect specimens for:

- PCR: Nasopharyngeal or throat swab
- Serology: IgM and IgG

Consult IDOH if measles is strongly suspected without a known exposure or if an exposed patient has unusual symptoms. Testing is discouraged when symptoms are not consistent with measles and there is no known exposure risk because false-positive results may occur.

Patient and exposure management

People with measles are contagious from 4 days before through 4 days after the rash begins. The day the rash begins is day zero. Patients should isolate during this period except when medical care is needed. They should call the healthcare facility before arriving.

There is no specific antiviral treatment for measles. Provide supportive care and treat complications. Follow CDC guidance on vitamin A for children with severe measles, including those who are hospitalized.

For exposed people without evidence of immunity:

- Give MMR vaccine within 72 hours of exposure when appropriate.
- Give immune globulin within 6 days of exposure when appropriate.
- Follow current CDC guidance because recommendations vary by age and health condition.
- Monitor for symptoms for 21 days after the last exposure.
- Tell patients to call before visiting a healthcare facility if symptoms develop.

Immunity and vaccination

Healthcare workers caring for patients with suspected measles should have one of the following:

- Documentation of two doses of live measles or MMR vaccine given at least 28 days apart
- Laboratory evidence of immunity
- Laboratory confirmation of measles disease

Routine childhood vaccination includes the first dose at 12 to 15 months and the second dose at 4 to 6 years. Review adult vaccination records and follow current CDC and ACIP guidance when documentation is missing or special circumstances apply.

Children younger than 12 months may be able to get an MMR: MMR recommendations. While MMR vaccination is not routinely recommended for children under age 12 months, MMR vaccination can be safely given to children as young as six months if they are at higher risk. For example, if travelling internationally or living in an area with an outbreak and the health department recommends an MMR dose at age 6–11 months. Children who receive an MMR vaccine dose before their first birthday should still receive 2 MMR vaccine doses according to the routine schedule.

Resources

- IDOH measles page
- CDC clinical overview
- IDOH general questions: 317-233-1325