

Adam Crum
Commissioner

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Department of Health
and Social Services

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Clinton Bennett, DHSS, (907) 269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

Measles case confirmed in Alaska

July 16, 2019 ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has confirmed a single case of measles in an unvaccinated teenager from the Kenai Peninsula who recently traveled out of state to Arizona via Seattle, Washington. This makes Alaska the 29th state to have a confirmed case of measles in 2019.

The DHSS Public Health Laboratory in Fairbanks confirmed the diagnosis today at 5:30 p.m.

Only people who may have been exposed and are not already immune to measles either by adequate immunization or from having the disease in the past are at immediate risk.

Some people may have been exposed to measles through this confirmed case. A list of possible exposure locations, including dates and times, is posted on the DHSS [measles webpage](#) and will be updated regularly as more information becomes available. Known exposure locations during the infectious period when measles can spread to other people include Froso's Family Dining in Soldotna, July 8-9 and July 11-13, and Urgent Care of Soldotna and Central Peninsula Hospital on July 14. The patient has been isolated at home since then and is recovering.

DHSS epidemiologists and Kenai Public Health Center nurses have informed restaurant management and health care professionals at those facilities of the confirmed measles case so those who may have been exposed and are not already protected can take the necessary preventative measures.

Epidemiologists have also been in contact with health officials in Arizona and Washington. It's not yet known specifically where the exposure occurred.

The last confirmed case of measles in an Alaskan patient was diagnosed in 2015 in Fairbanks. That was after almost 15 years with no measles cases. In August 2018, a measles case was confirmed in an out-of-state cruise ship passenger that was bound for Alaska. Fortunately, that case did not lead to any additional cases of measles in Alaska.

Signs of measles may appear between 7 to 21 days after exposure (average of 14 days) so those who may have been exposed should watch for signs of illness. Measles often starts with a fever (as high as 105°F), cough, runny nose, red eyes and sore throat. A rash follows that usually starts on the face and

spreads to the rest of the body. If anyone thinks they might have measles, they should call their health care provider or local public health center immediately. It's important to get care quickly, but **people should call first** and not go directly to the doctor's office, clinic or school. Health care providers may have instructions to prevent exposing others to an infectious disease.

The [current measles vaccination recommendations for Alaska](#) (May 31, 2019) can assist in determining whether a person is protected against measles. The MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine is the best defense against measles and will also help prevent the disease from spreading further in Alaska. When enough people are vaccinated against measles, the entire community is afforded protection. A list of places where Kenai Peninsula residents can get vaccinated is provided on the [DHSS measles webpage](#).

Keep in mind that not everyone is at risk for measles. You are considered adequately protected if:

- You are a preschool age child with one measles vaccine (MMR – measles, mumps, rubella).
- You are a school-aged child or college student who has received two doses of measles vaccine.
- You are a health care worker who has had two doses of measles vaccine.
- You are an adult who is not a health care worker and who has had one dose of measles vaccine.
- You were born before 1957.
- You have had the measles, diagnosed by a health care provider and confirmed with a lab test.
- You have had a blood test that shows you are immune to measles.

The MMR vaccine is considered safe and highly effective, and unlike for mumps, a booster shot is not needed for adults who were effectively vaccinated as children. For more information about measles and regular updates, visit the [DHSS measles webpage](#). More information can also be found on the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention's measles webpage](#).

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