

TN Health Alert Network Communication:
Recent Measles Exposure in Middle Tennessee
August 18, 2026

Summary

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) was recently notified of a [measles outbreak in Kentucky](#), just across the Tennessee-Kentucky border. One case recently visited several Tennessee healthcare facilities, resulting in multiple exposures. We anticipate that additional cases may seek care at Tennessee healthcare facilities in the coming days and weeks.

As a reminder, there have been a significant rise in measles cases in the United States and globally since 2025. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), there have been 2,566 cases of measles across 47 jurisdictions in 2026 (as of 8/13/26).

Clinicians should **rapidly identify suspected measles infections, isolate patients quickly and immediately inform public health** by reporting suspected measles cases to TDH at 615-741-7247. Delays in identification of cases can lead to additional exposures and ongoing transmission.

Recommendations to Identify, Isolate and Inform:

1. *Identify* – Clinicians should maintain high suspicion for measles in unvaccinated individuals who present with fever and rash, especially with history of travel to states or countries with recent measles cases. Measles is a highly contagious viral illness characterized by a prodrome of fever, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis followed by a maculopapular rash that begins on the head and descends to the neck, trunk, upper extremities, and lower extremities. Although less likely, measles infection may be considered in individuals with history of one or two doses of MMR vaccine if clinical presentation is consistent and/or epidemiological link to a known case is present.
2. *Isolate* – To avoid exposures within healthcare facilities, patients presenting with concern for measles or compatible symptoms should be immediately masked with a surgical mask and isolated in a room with a closed door. [Airborne precautions](#) should be implemented, including placement in a negative pressure airborne isolation room as available. Measles virus can remain suspended in the air for up to two hours after an infected person has vacated an area. Areas where suspected cases have spent time should be closed off and remain unoccupied for at least two hours. Patients with suspected measles should be cared for by staff with documented [immunity to measles](#).
3. *Inform* – Clinicians should immediately report suspected measles cases to **TDH by calling the Vaccine Preventable Diseases Program at 615-741-7247**. Public health should be informed prior to specimen collection.

Testing

Measles testing is available at the TDH State Public Health Laboratory with prior consultation and approval from a member of the Vaccine Preventable Disease and Immunization Program (VPDIP). **Clinicians should call TDH immediately at 615-741-7247 to report any suspected measles infection and to request testing approval.** PCR testing is preferred; specifically, a nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal, or nasal swab in viral transport media for measles PCR should be collected. Please refer to the TDH [Laboratory Directory of Services \(Measles\)](#) for detailed information on specimen collection, storage, and transport.

Measles and Pregnancy

Measles during pregnancy can lead to serious complications, such as pneumonia and death. It is also associated with miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight. In utero exposure can lead to congenital measles infection in the newborn, which can result in encephalitis and death. **For pregnant individuals without evidence of immunity who are exposed to measles, consider administering immune globulin (most effective within 6 days of exposure).**

For more information

Additional information concerning measles reporting requirements, general information, and cases and outbreaks can be found at the below links.

- [TDH Measles Webpage](#)
- [TDH Measles Toolkit](#)
- [CDC Measles Webpage](#)
- [CDC Measles Cases and Outbreaks](#)

Thank you for your participation in public health in Tennessee. Please contact 615-741-7247 to reach the TDH Vaccine Preventable Diseases and Immunization Program.
