HEALTHY GALLATIN

A RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY LIVING FROM THE
GALLATIN CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

HUMAN SERVICES • 406.582.3100, hs@gallatin.mt.gov
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH • 406.582.3120, ehs@gallatin.mt.gov
WIC • 406.582.3115, wic@gallatin.mt.gov

healthygallatin.org

April 22, 2025

To: Parents and caregivers of students in Gallatin County

From: Lori Christenson, MPH, Health Officer, Gallatin City-County Health Department

Subject: Measles cases in Gallatin County

Dear parent or caregiver:

Last week, five cases of measles were confirmed among Gallatin County residents. These were the first confirmed cases of measles in the state of Montana since 1990. Currently, there are no known school or daycare exposures in our community. As of April 17, 2025, a total of 800 confirmed measles cases have been reported across 26 jurisdictions: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York City, New York State, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. More details can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html.

Measles is highly contagious and can be especially dangerous for young children. Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can stay in the air for up to 2 hours after an infected individual leaves a room, and you do not need to be in direct contact with someone who is sick to catch it. Individuals without prior measles infection or vaccination have a 90% likelihood of contracting the disease if exposed. Measles can cause serious health problems like pneumonia, brain swelling, and pregnancy complications. Even healthy children and adults can have severe complications. Measles symptoms typically appear 7 to 14 days after an exposure but may appear as late as 21 days following an exposure. Symptoms may include a high fever that can spike above 104°F, cough, runny nose, red and watery eyes, and a rash that usually develops three to five days after symptoms begin. Being aware of these signs can help with early detection and prevent further spread of the virus.

The best way to protect against measles is to get vaccinated. Children typically receive their first dose of measles vaccine (MMR) between 12-15 months of age; however, children as young as 6 months are eligible to receive the vaccine in the event of an outbreak or with upcoming international travel. The measles vaccine is very safe, and any mild side effects outweigh the dangers of the disease. Getting vaccinated helps protect you, your family, and your community. Two doses of the MMR vaccine are 97% effective at preventing measles, one dose is 93% effective. While breakthrough cases may occur, the overwhelming majority of cases in the current outbreak (96%) are among individuals who do not have immunity. Montana state law requires measles vaccines for children who attend school or submittal of an exemption due to medical or religious reasons (ARM 37.114.705, ARM 37.114.710). Those at greatest risk of being infected with measles are people who have not been immunized.

It is important to know that in accordance with the Administrative Rules of Montana 37.114.101 and Montana Code Annotated 50-2-118 and 20-5-405, students who are not immunized against measles and who are exposed to a known case may be excluded from school until the risk of transmission decreases, **for at least 21 days or until 4 full days after a measles rash develops**. In the event of a measles case at your school, the Health Department will advise school officials to exclude students from the school setting and school-related events who do not have documented immunity to measles. This measure is implemented because those without documented immunity are highly likely to become infected with measles within a 21-day period from their exposure. Additionally, measles is contagious for four full days before the rash appears, when individuals may or may not have symptoms but can still spread the virus to others.

Individuals are considered immune to measles if any of the following are true:

- You are a pre-school age child with one measles vaccine (MMR – measles, mumps, rubella);
- You are a school-age child (K-12) who has had two measles vaccines (MMR - measles, mumps, rubella);
- You were born before 1957, or have received at least one-dose of measles vaccine;
- You have had measles disease (diagnosed by a health care provider and confirmed with a lab test);
- You have had a blood test (titer) that shows you are immune to measles. If you have proven immunity, that can serve as adequate documentation.

The Health Department advises all families to know their immunization status and make plans accordingly. Please ensure the school has a copy of your student's immunization record on file. Those wishing to obtain an immunization can call their health care provider or contact Gallatin City-County Health Department at 406-582-3100.

If anyone in your household has a known exposure to measles, you should contact your provider, and/or the health department *immediately* for guidance on next steps.

If you cannot locate your vaccine record, please use the following resource for locating records: https://www.vaccineinformation.org/vaccine-basics/finding-vaccine-records. If you are unable to locate your record, you can ask your student's health care provider about receiving another dose.

Additional up-to-date information on measles activity in Montana can be found at Montana Department of Health and Human Services website: https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/measles

Additional information about measles can be found on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: https://www.cdc.gov/measles.

Sincerely,

Lori Christenson, MPH
Health Officer