



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH  
LANSING

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

JAMES K. HAVEMAN  
DIRECTOR

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CONTACT: Angela Minicuci  
(517) 241-2112

### **Measles Cases in Michigan, Nationally Concern Health Officials**

LANSING – Michigan is among 16 states that have reported cases of measles in 2013 through mid-August, according to a recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The once common disease is now a rarity in United States, but that progress may be threatened by the high incidence of measles elsewhere in the world and insufficient levels of immunizations in some communities.

"Measles is highly contagious and is by no means a trivial disease. It can result in hospitalization, pneumonia, encephalitis, and death," said Dr. Matthew Davis, Chief Medical Executive with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH). "We need to achieve and sustain high levels of vaccination in Michigan and across the United States. Vaccination is the best way to prevent measles outbreaks from occurring and to prevent this disease from spreading widely in our communities."

According to the CDC, there were 159 cases reported nationally as of Aug. 24, 2013. From 2001–2012, the average number of measles cases reported nationally per year was 60. Michigan reported two of the cases this year, and is currently investigating another. Of the two Michigan cases, both involved infants who were exposed to the disease when they traveled out of the country. They have since recovered.

Both of Michigan's cases involved infants younger than 12 months of age. The first of two routine childhood measles vaccine doses is given at 12 months of age, but current recommendations call for infants as young as 6 months who will be traveling outside of the U.S. to be vaccinated against measles. This recommendation means that parents can begin protecting their children as early as 6 months of age if they have plans to travel internationally.

Nearly all of the 159 cases nationally were "import-associated," meaning that they were directly or indirectly linked to a case or an exposure in another country. The majority of cases, 82 percent, occurred among persons who were not vaccinated, with another 8 percent in persons with an unknown vaccination status. Measles vaccine has been routinely in use and recommended for children in the U.S. since the 1960s. The CDC report also identified 8 outbreaks among the 159 cases, including one involving 58 cases, the largest outbreak nationally since 1996.

"Measles vaccine is highly effective and very safe, as numerous studies have confirmed the vaccine's effectiveness and safety record," continued Dr. Davis. "People who vaccinate themselves and their children are not only protecting the health their families, but also the community and state of Michigan as a whole."

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www.michigan.gov • 517-373-3740