STATE OF MICHIGAN

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Nov. 23, 2026

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Michigan health officials urge families to stay up to date on vaccinations as measles cases climb and influenza-related hospitalizations increase

LANSING, Mich. - The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) urges residents to stay up to date on recommended vaccinations, including measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and influenza, ahead of holiday gatherings. As measles cases continue to rise in Michigan and influenza-related hospitalizations increase, vaccination remains one of the most effective ways to protect individuals, families and communities from serious illness during the holiday season.

Measles

The United States recently lost measles elimination status. This means that continuous local measles transmission has been reestablished in the country over the last 12 months. Variations in vaccination coverage across communities contribute to the continued risk of measles transmission. As of Tuesday, Nov. 17, Michigan has recorded 37 confirmed measles cases across multiple counties, including 16 cases confirmed between Oct. 26 and Nov. 17.

“With measles cases continuing to rise in Michigan and across the country, holiday travel serves as an important reminder to make sure you and your family are protected,” said Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian, chief medical executive. “Unlike many vaccines that primarily reduce the severity of illness, the MMR vaccine is highly effective at preventing measles infection itself. Two doses provide about 97% protection and long-lasting immunity against a disease that is among the most contagious viruses we know. As the risk of exposure increases, vaccination remains our strongest tool for keeping Michigan families safe.”

As measles becomes more widespread, the likelihood of encountering the highly contagious virus is greater than it has been in decades. MDHHS encourages residents to take the following steps:

- **Know your measles immunity status.** Review vaccination records and talk with a health care provider if you are unsure that you’re protected against measles. This is especially important for women who may become pregnant as the MMR vaccine is not recommended during pregnancy. Ensuring vaccination before pregnancy can help protect pregnant women and provide early protection to infants through maternal antibodies.

- **Get vaccinated against measles.** The MMR vaccine is the most effective way to protect against measles. The two-dose series is recommended between 12 through 15 months of age and 4 through 6 years of age and is 97% effective at prevention of measles infection. Increasing vaccination coverage helps prevent the spread of measles and protects people who may be more vulnerable to serious illness, including infants who are too young to be vaccinated and people with certain medical conditions.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of measles.** Symptoms typically begin with a fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes, followed by a rash that usually starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body.
- **Know what to do if you think you have measles.** Anyone who develops symptoms or believes they may have been exposed to measles should call their health care provider before entering health care facilities, including urgent cares and emergency departments. Calling ahead allows health care facilities to take steps to prevent other patients from being exposed.

Influenza

Influenza activity has started early and is increasing in Michigan. Although respiratory illness activity is currently at a minimal level in Michigan, some parts of the country are already experiencing high levels of activity including Texas, Louisiana, South Carolina, Oregon and New York City. Nationally, seven children have died from influenza during the current 2026-27 flu season; none of the children were from Michigan.

Michigan activity typically lags a few weeks behind the national trend, meaning the next few weeks are likely to see increasing local activity, especially as families travel and gather for the holidays.

During the 2025-26 influenza season, Michigan weekly influenza hospitalizations increased from 142 the week of Dec. 6, 2025, to a peak of 1,283 four weeks later. Michigan has already reported 188 influenza hospitalizations so far this year as of the week of Saturday, Nov. 14. This indicates influenza is hitting earlier than last year. Activity is likely to increase and accelerate over the next several weeks.

“Respiratory virus season is underway in Michigan, and we are already seeing flu activity increase,” said Bagdasarian. “If you haven't been vaccinated yet, it's not too late. Flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines remain one of our best tools for reducing the risk of serious illness, hospitalization and death.”

Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways to protect against influenza, however, only 18.2% of Michigan residents have been vaccinated this season for influenza. MDHHS encourages residents to:

- **Get the annual influenza vaccination.** It takes about two weeks after vaccination for the body to develop protection, meaning it is currently a critical time for everyone 6 months and older to get their annual flu vaccine ahead of

increased seasonal activity and holiday gatherings. Influenza vaccinations help lessen symptom severity for those affected, decreasing the likelihood of hospitalization or complications, which is particularly important among those with increased risk for serious illness.

- **Help reduce the spread**: Other actions, such as staying home when sick, properly covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands frequently and improving indoor ventilation, can also help reduce the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses.

MDHHS urges individuals to talk with their health care provider and stay up to date on recommended vaccinations, including MMR and influenza, to ensure they and their loved ones are protected ahead of holiday gatherings and throughout respiratory virus season.

Vaccines are an essential health benefit under the Affordable Care Act and are covered with no out-of-pocket costs by most health plans in Michigan.

The influenza vaccine is widely available at local health departments, physicians' offices and pharmacies around the state. Find a location by using the Vaccine Finder. Information on measles is available at Michigan.gov/measles. Information regarding influenza vaccine recommendations and seasonal flu activity is available at Michigan.gov/flu.

Information for parents regarding immunizations and vaccination schedules can be found at IVaccinate.

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