



September 19, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

In keeping with the vital partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state, tribal, local, and territorial health officials, we would like to share important information about measles outbreaks and the current measles elimination status in the United States.

Measles was declared eliminated from the United States in 2000, thanks to a highly effective vaccination program. During 1958-1962, the four years before the first measles vaccine was licensed in the United States in 1963, an average of 503,282 measles cases and 432 measles-associated deaths were reported each year in the United States. Since then, widespread use of measles vaccine has led to a greater than 99 percent reduction in cases. Despite these gains, measles is still commonly spread in many parts of the world and travelers continue to bring it into the United States, causing outbreaks among communities with many people who are not vaccinated.

The World Health Organization defines measles elimination as “the absence of endemic measles virus transmission in a defined geographical area (e.g., region or country) for at least 12 months in the presence of a surveillance system that has been verified to be performing well.” Countries lose their measles elimination status if a chain of transmission in a given outbreak is ongoing for more than 12 months.

In 2019, more than 1,000 cases of measles have occurred in the United States. Most of these cases were related to outbreaks in close-knit communities with low vaccination coverage in New York City and New York state. These outbreaks began in September 2018 and have been unusual in their duration and size relative to other recent measles outbreaks. They have been fueled by 10 independent, imported index cases. Thanks to extraordinary efforts by public health officials on the ground in New York City, surrounding counties, and New York state, these outbreaks appear to be winding down. After the incidence peaked in April 2019, New York City was able to declare their outbreak over after passing the 42 days (i.e., two incubation periods) since an associated case. There has not been a measles case associated with the New York state outbreak since August 19. However, the United States could lose measles elimination status if there are any new measles cases that are potentially connected to these outbreaks on or after October 2.

If the United States loses its measles elimination status, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will make a formal announcement. CDC will continue to provide information on United States' measles elimination status here: [wwwdev.cdc.gov/measles/elimination.html](http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/measles/elimination.html).


It is important to remember that measles vaccination coverage nationwide is high. The vast majority of parents in the United States are choosing to vaccinate and protect their children, meaning most people in the country remain at low risk for getting the disease. If the United

States loses measles elimination status because of an ongoing outbreak, the risk for measles for the majority of the population remains low. However, in every state there are individuals and communities who are at risk of measles because of lower immunization coverage.

Regardless of whether the United States loses measles elimination status, we must remain vigilant and adapt to the changing dynamics of outbreaks of measles and other vaccine preventable diseases. CDC will continue to work with our state, tribal, local, and territorial partners, to try to identify every case of measles, stop further transmission, and prevent future outbreaks. We need your help to find innovative ways to identify and protect communities with low vaccination coverage, empower families and providers to ensure parents are confident in their decision to vaccinate, and stop the spread of vaccine myths and misinformation that can undermine public trust in the safety and efficacy of vaccines.

Sincerely,

  
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