NT Health

Centre for Disease Control

Public health alert

Issued: 17 Aug 2026
Issued to: All clinicians

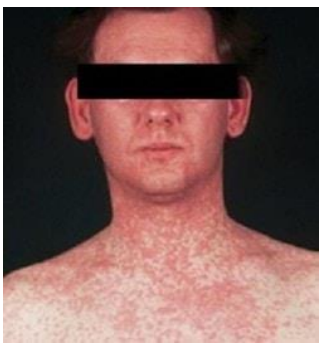
Measles - Be alert for cases and vaccinate

Summary

- There is currently an increased risk of measles in the Northern Territory (NT) due to measles outbreaks interstate and overseas.
- Australia has recorded 117 measles cases in 2026 year-to-date which is above the 5-year national annual mean of 35.6 cases. The majority of these cases were acquired overseas, highlighting the risk of importation and the subsequent local transmission that follows.
- Frequent travel between Australia and countries experiencing measles transmission continue to pose a risk of imported cases in the NT.
- Clinicians are strongly encouraged to consider measles in anyone presenting with fever and rash, particularly people with recent overseas travel, interstate travel, contact with returned travellers, or uncertain vaccination status.
- Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can cause serious complications, such as pneumonia and encephalitis. Symptoms include fever, cough, coryza, conjunctivitis and a maculopapular rash that typically begins on the face before spreading to the body.
- The best protection against measles is vaccination – encourage all patients and staff to check their vaccination status and ensure they have had 2 documented measles-containing vaccines. Many Territorians have not had 2 doses.

Action

- Please think of measles in anyone presenting with fever and rash, particularly if they have:
  - travelled overseas or interstate in the previous 18 days;
  - attended a location linked to a measles exposure alert; or
  - are unvaccinated or have uncertain vaccination status.



- Isolate the person and test with 3 samples:
  - 1 urine sample (PCR measles)
  - 1 throat swab (PCR measles)
  - 1 nose swab up both nostrils (PCR measles)

NThealth

Centre for Disease Control
Public Health Division
(08) 8922 8044 or 1800 008 002
CDCSurveillance.DARWIN@nt.gov.au

- Samples should be forwarded to Royal Darwin Hospital (or nearest public hospital lab) **following discussion with the NT Centre for Disease Control (NT CDC)** on (08) 8922 8044.

Transmission

- Measles is highly contagious and can be spread by brief casual contact. Transmission occurs through airborne spread and by inhalation of infectious droplets.
- Contacts are defined as having shared the same air space in enclosed areas as a case for any length of time.
- Measles virus may remain in environments up to 30 minutes after the case has left.
- It may take up to 18 days for symptoms to develop. Cases are considered infectious from 24 hours before the onset of first symptoms, or from 4 days prior to rash onset if no prodromal symptoms, until 4 days after the onset of rash.
- Contacts of asymptomatic contacts are not currently considered to be at risk of infection.

Case management

- Notify CDC immediately of any suspected cases on (08) 8922 8044 and collect specimens.
- Do not send patients with suspected measles to pathology collection centres.
- Do not place suspected measles patients in general waiting areas. See them in a separate room (the room should not be used for susceptible patients/staff for 30 minutes following the consultation with the suspected case).
- Ensure that all your staff are immune, i.e. they have either had measles or have had 2 doses of measles-containing vaccine at 12 months or older at least 4 weeks apart.
- Anyone with confirmed measles should be excluded from work, school, and other public places and should not use public transport, until at least 4 days after the onset of their rash.

Vaccination

- Measles-containing vaccine is recommended for all children as part of the National Immunisation Program (NIP) at 12 months of age as MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine, and at 18 months of age as MMRV (measles-mumps-rubella-varicella) vaccine.
- **MMR vaccinations are FREE** and available at GP's, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, other health care clinics and vaccinating pharmacies in the NT.
- People planning on travelling overseas with infants aged 6 to 11 months should discuss their travel plans with their GP, as the schedule can be adjusted for children travelling overseas.
- Anyone born after 1965 who has never had measles infection should see their doctor to make sure that they have had 2 doses of measles vaccine at least four weeks apart.

Contact & advice

For more information about measles, including information for contacts of measles, the public, and healthcare providers, visit Measles | NT Health.

Scan or click QR code for NT Public Health Alerts

Issued by: Dr Ashish Yadav, Medical Advisor, Immunisation
Approved by: Dr Vicki Krause, Director Centre for Disease Control