

August 2019

Dear Parents,

Due to the recent outbreaks of measles in the United States, we are writing you to make you aware of some important details. If there is a measles case in your child's school, your child may not be able to attend school until the outbreak ends, if they have not been immunized against the disease.

Measles is one of the most contagious of all infectious diseases; up to 9 out of 10 susceptible persons exposed will develop measles. A single case of the measles can quickly spiral into an outbreak, because people may not know they have the illness (and are spreading it) for several days before they begin to show rash symptoms.

The measles virus is spread by direct contact with infectious respiratory droplets when the infected person coughs, breathes, or sneezes. The measles virus can remain infectious in the environment for up to 2 hours after an infected person leaves the area. The length of incubation from exposure to measles virus to symptom development is 7 to 21 days. The telltale rash occurs on average 14 days after exposure, and 4 days after symptoms first appear.

If there is an outbreak of measles in New Mexico and your child is not immunized against the disease, all schools will be encouraged to follow the protocol recommended by the New Mexico Department of Health and the CDC, which states your child will not be allowed to attend classes for at least 42 days (the length of two incubation periods) following the last known case. Additionally, your school will likely not permit unimmunized students to travel on any school-sponsored activity to other states, countries, or areas in New Mexico that have had outbreaks of measles.

In order to ensure that your child will be able to attend school or travel on school-sponsored trips in the event of an outbreak of measles in NM, or other areas, your child must have received two doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR). After receiving the first dose, there is a minimum 28 day waiting period until a second dose can be administered. Documentation that those immunizations were given must be provided to your school nurse or administrator.

If you need information about where this vaccine can be obtained at no cost to you, please contact your child's primary care physician, your local Public Health Office or the Immunization Program at 505-827-2356 or toll free 1-833-882-6454, and we will be happy to provide this information to you.

Sincerely,

*The Immunization Program*

**PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION**

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