



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TDH CONFIRMS FIRST TENNESSEE MEASLES CASE FOR 2019

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Health is investigating a case of measles after the State Public Health Laboratory confirmed a positive test for the illness in a resident of the East Tennessee.

While the investigation is currently centered in East Tennessee, all Tennesseans should be aware of measles and its symptoms. These symptoms may include fever, runny nose, body aches, watery eyes and white spots in the mouth. The illness is typically accompanied by a red, spotty rash that begins on the face and spreads over the body. Nearly one in three measles patients will develop ear infections, diarrhea or pneumonia. Measles can be fatal in approximately one to two out of every 1,000 cases.

“Our efforts are focused on preventing the spread of illness to others,” said TDH State Epidemiologist Tim Jones, MD. “This appearance of measles is a reminder about the importance of vaccines and how they can particularly protect our most vulnerable, including infants and those with compromised immune systems.”

The measles virus is highly contagious and can stay airborne or live on surfaces for up to two hours. People recently infected with measles may not have any symptoms of illness, but can transmit the virus for about five days before the typical measles rash appears.

“Most people in Tennessee are vaccinated against measles and that’s important, but infants and those with weakened immune systems are still at high risk for infection,” said TDH Commissioner Lisa Piercey, MD, MBA, FAAP. “The measles-mumps-rubella or MMR vaccine is safe and widely available. Call your health care provider to check your immunization status and schedule your vaccine if you haven’t had one.”

All Tennesseans are urged to ensure they are up-to date on MMR vaccine. Anyone who believes they or a loved one has measles symptoms should call first before going to a health care facility to keep others from being exposed.

People with questions about what to do to protect themselves against measles should call a health care provider, the [local health department](#) or a hotline established to provide answers to questions from the public about measles. The hotline number is **865-549-5343**; calls to the hotline will be answered from 7 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Central time/8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Eastern time daily until further notice.

Tennessee has had only 15 cases of measles in the last decade due to relatively high vaccination rates. All children should have their first measles vaccinations at age 12-15 months,



followed by a second dose at four to six years of age. Teens and adults should check with their doctors to make sure they are protected against measles. Talk with your health care provider about vaccination before leaving for international trips.

For more information about measles, visit www.cdc.gov/features/measles/index.html.

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. Learn more about TDH services and programs at www.tn.gov/health.

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MEDIA NOTE: An availability with State Epidemiologist Tim Jones, MD will be offered at 2:30 p.m. Central time today at the TDH Central Office at 710 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, 37243. Those who cannot attend in person may call 888-757-2790 and use passcode 781337 to participate. Please contact Shelley Walker at Shelley.Walker@tn.gov or 615-804-9972 if you plan to attend in person.

This news release can be accessed online at www.tn.gov/health/news.html.

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