



Safety Alert 002/24

Issue date
18 January 2024

Distributed to:

Chief Executives
Directors of Clinical Governance
Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit

Action required by:

Chief Executives
Directors of Clinical Governance

We recommend you also inform:

Directors, Managers and Staff of:

- Emergency Departments
- Infectious Diseases
- Paediatrics
- General Medicine
- PHU
- Nursing

Deadline for completion of action
20/01/2024

Expert Reference Group

Content reviewed by:

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Clinical Excellence Commission

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Review date
January 2025

Updated: Clinician Alert – Measles in NSW

What is updated in this Safety Alert from 005/23?

There have been two recent cases of overseas acquired measles in NSW.

Situation

There have been two cases of measles recently diagnosed in NSW, with both cases recently travelling from overseas.

The cases are not linked and both acquired infection overseas. The first case travelled from Pakistan and the second case from Saudi Arabia.

Both cases have spent time within NSW Public Hospital Emergency Departments, resulting in possible measles virus exposure to patients and staff. Contact tracing is underway, however clinicians should be alert to possible measles cases presenting to Emergency Departments.

A full list of sites each case visited is available on the NSW Health page: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/alerts/Pages/default.aspx>.

More imported cases of measles are expected as people return from overseas holidays.

Background

Measles is a highly contagious infectious disease and is notifiable based on clinical suspicion alone.

Measles remains common in many parts of the world, with large outbreaks currently occurring in several countries, including Yemen, India, Kazakhstan, Ethiopia and Pakistan.

There is a risk of measles cases occurring in NSW and measles should be considered as part of any differential diagnosis in someone presenting with consistent symptoms.

There should be a high index of suspicion for measles in anyone with clinically compatible symptoms who recently arrived in NSW from overseas, even if they report measles vaccination.

Measles containing vaccines (MMR) are free in NSW for those born during or after 1966 who have not previously had two documented doses.

Assessment

Measles typically presents with a 2–4-day prodromal illness with fever, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis.

A maculopapular rash then typically begins on the face and neck and then spreads down the body. Measles in previously vaccinated people may present atypically, with milder symptoms and a slower progression to the rash.

Cases are usually infectious from the day before the prodrome to four days after the rash onset.

It can take up to 18 days for symptoms to appear following exposure to a person with measles.



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Clinical Recommendations

- Consider measles in anyone with fever, cough, coryza, conjunctivitis or a maculopapular rash.
- **Isolate** suspected measles cases
- **Notify** your public health unit (PHU) immediately on 1300 066 055 of any suspected measles cases (don't wait for test results before calling). PHUs will contact trace any confirmed measles case.
- **Test:** collect a nose and throat swab, and a first pass urine sample for nucleic acid testing (PCR). Blood for measles serology (IgM and IgG) can be performed. Mark the tests requested as URGENT. Your PHU can assist in expediting testing.
- Encourage measles vaccination; children aged from 6 months to under 12 months can have an MMR vaccination early if travelling overseas.

Measles travel posters and other resources for your clinic are available from the NSW Health measles page: www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/measles

Required actions for the Local Health Districts/Networks

1. Distribute this Safety Alert to all relevant clinicians and clinical departments for awareness and include a copy in relevant handovers and safety huddles.
2. Undertake a local risk assessment and develop strategies to mitigate the risk of missed or delayed diagnosis of measles.
3. Report all suspected and confirmed cases of measles to your Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.
4. Confirm receipt and distribution of this Safety Alert within 72 hours to cec-recalls@health.nsw.gov.au