

Script – Broadcast – There’s nothing catchy about getting the measles

INTRO

There’s a misperception that measles is a thing of the past. Not so.

Measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000 but is seeing a resurgence in 2024. As of March 22, there have been 64 cases across the U.S. – compared with 58 in all of 2023. The cases have appeared in at least 17 states so far, including Illinois and Michigan.

The cause of the increase is two-fold – the number of people who are unvaccinated has increased and the rise in international travel to destinations such as Britain, Austria and the Philippines, where outbreaks have occurred.

Measles can affect anyone but is most common in children. According to Alissa Bartel, a nurse practitioner with OSF HealthCare, there’s no reason to be concerned yet. She says it's always good for parents to be aware, be educated and not alarmed, but know that it is possible, especially in those kids who are at highest risk.

(((SOT)))

Alissa Bartel, (BAR-TELL) nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare

“The most vulnerable of developing measles would be those who are not vaccinated; so, kids under 5 years old or any child who has not chosen to be vaccinated, also those who are receiving chemotherapy or any medications that might make them immunocompromised. Also, pregnant women are very high risk, not only for themselves if they haven't been vaccinated, but also for the child that they're carrying.”
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Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. It spreads when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. That person can spread measles to others even before knowing they have the disease — from four days before developing the measles rash through four days afterward.

Symptoms include a high fever, cough, runny nose and a rash that starts at the top of the head and travels down the trunk to the lower extremities. Complications can lead to pneumonia, swelling of the brain and even death.

TAG

The best way to prevent getting sick with the measles and spreading it to others is from the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend children get their first MMR dose between the ages of 12-15 months. The second dose is between ages 4-6. Teenagers and adults require only one dose and should get it as soon as possible.

For parents experiencing vaccination hesitancy, Bartel recommends having a conversation with your family physician. Experts stress it’s important to eliminate potential barriers such as cost. Children can be vaccinated for free through private insurance or the Vaccines for Children Program, a federally funded, state administered program that provides free vaccines to eligible children ages 18 and younger.