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Health Officials Announce Measles Case, Potential Exposures in Kentucky and Tennessee

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 10, 2024) – Today, health officials with the Barren River Health District and the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) announced a confirmed case of measles identified in a Tennessee resident who is a student at Western Kentucky University (WKU).

The student, who is unvaccinated, had recently traveled internationally, where they are presumed to have been exposed to measles. They attended several classes and activities on campus and in the local community while infectious with measles on Aug. 28, 29 and 30. No further information about the individual will be released due to privacy regulations.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory virus that is spread through the air. Early symptoms of measles begin 8-12 days after exposure and include high fever, cough, runny nose and red/watery eyes. The characteristic measles rash typically appears three to five days after symptoms begin, usually on the face before spreading to the rest of the body.

Kentucky and Tennessee health officials are working together to evaluate exposures. Individuals who were at the following locations during the dates and times listed may have been exposed to the measles virus:

- The Commons at Helm Library (WKU): 1906 College Heights Blvd. #11067, Bowling Green, KY 42101
 - Wednesday, Aug. 28, (7:45-10 a.m.; 8-10:30 p.m.)
 - Thursday, Aug. 29, (7:45-10 a.m.)
 - Friday, Aug. 30, (7:45-10 a.m.)

- WKU Student Union – Starbucks: 1906 College Heights Blvd., Bowling Green, KY 42101
 - Wednesday, Aug. 28, (6:30-9:30 p.m.)
- Simply Ramen Restaurant: 801 Campbell Lane, Bowling Green, KY 42014
 - Thursday, Aug. 29, (7-11 p.m.)

“Measles is one of the most contagious viruses,” said KDPH Commissioner Dr. Steven Stack. “Individuals who were exposed and are unvaccinated should quarantine for 21 days after their exposure and contact their health care provider immediately if they develop symptoms. It is important to call the health care facility to make them aware of your measles exposure and symptoms prior to entering, so that others are not exposed.”

In the United States, the first dose of measles vaccine is routinely administered in combination with mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) to children at age 12-15 months. A second MMR dose is routinely administered at 4-6 years old. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles.

The most [recent school immunization assessment](#) indicates that MMR vaccine coverage among Kentucky kindergarteners is 90% and lower than the Healthy People 2030 target of 95%.

“Measles is only an airplane ride away,” said Dr. Stack. “Fortunately, most Kentuckians are immune to measles due to safe and effective vaccination.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there have been [several outbreaks of measles this year](#) linked to individuals with international travel. Earlier this year, the CDC issued a [health advisory](#) to inform clinicians and public health officials of an increase in measles cases occurring globally and in the United States.

Although no additional confirmed measles cases have yet been reported in Kentucky this year, KDPH has collaborated with the Ohio Department of Health on a [measles exposure in January](#) at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.

If you have questions or concerns about a potential measles exposure, contact your health care provider or Barren River District Health Department at 833-551-0953.

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For more information about measles, visit the Kentucky Department for Public Health measles [website](#) or the CDC measles [website](#).