Information for Child Care Centers and Schools with Cases of Measles

Updated 5/4/17

What does being exposed to measles mean?
Any child in the same place as a person or child who is sick with measles is considered exposed. Being exposed to measles does not mean you are sick with measles yet. However, children who have not been vaccinated are very likely to get sick with measles if they are exposed.

What does it mean to be infectious with measles?
Infectious means a person or child is sick with measles and can spread the disease to other people. People can spread measles to others even before they have symptoms.

What does it mean to be excluded from child care or school?
Being excluded means that a child who was exposed to measles cannot go to any child care or school for a certain amount of time. This is to make sure the child does not spread measles to others if the child becomes sick. Measles can spread to other people very easily, so children that could get sick have to stay out of child care or school. They also cannot go to a health care facility unless they need medical care and should call first if possible. They should also stay away from places where many people gather.

Who has to stay out of child care or school?
Children who have not had measles disease or have not had the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine because they are too young, have a medical condition where they can’t get vaccinated, or their parents chose not to vaccinate, have to stay out of child care or school.

Exclusion is based solely on protecting the health of the children who aren’t vaccinated (for both medical and non-medical reasons) and preventing the spread of disease.

Why are children who have not been vaccinated being excluded?
Measles spreads easily through the air. Any child who has not received the MMR vaccine or had measles disease is likely to get sick if they are in the same place as someone who has measles. Also, people with measles can spread the disease to others before they have symptoms.

How are families contacted by MDH about being excluded?
MDH has received lists of children who attend your child care or school. We check our immunization registry to see if the child has a record of getting at least one MMR vaccine. If they have, they can be in child care or school. If the child does not have an MMR vaccine record, we call the family. We talk to the family and tell them that children who have not been vaccinated, and were in the same place as a person who was sick with measles, have to stay out of child care or school until a certain date.
Do children or siblings who were not exposed have to stay out of child care or school?

No, only people who were in the same place as a person confirmed to have measles need to stay out of child care or school. You cannot spread measles if you have not been directly exposed.

What if excluded children get MMR vaccine?

If a child gets an MMR vaccine now, it won’t protect them from a measles exposure that has already happened. It takes some time for your body to build up protection after getting vaccinated. We encourage parents to vaccinate their child if they are old enough to get the MMR vaccine, but getting vaccinated while a student is excluded does not change the amount of time a child has to stay out of child care or school. However, if the child is exposed to another case of measles in the future, they will not need to be excluded.

Could a child come back before the exclusion period ends?

There are two situations where children may be able to come back to child care or school before the exclusion period ends. The health department will tell families if they can go back early.

1. **Children can come back if they get post-exposure prophylaxis.** This means the family would have been contacted by the health department about being at a hospital or clinic at the same time as a person who was sick with measles. Some of these children could get a medicine called immune globulin or a specially-prescribed dose of the measles vaccine. If our instructions were followed, the child can come back to child care or school.

2. **Children who were sick with measles and then get better can come back.** They are considered protected (immune). This means it is very unlikely they would get sick with measles again. These children will receive a letter from the health department telling them when to return to child care or school.

Can a child care center take in new children during the time others are excluded?

We recommend that child care centers not take in new children who have not received at least one dose of the MMR vaccine during the time that other children are excluded. Children who have received MMR vaccine at least 3 weeks ago can start during the time that other children are excluded.