

**JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE**Public Health Facility, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, New York 13601

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Increasing Measles Cases in Rural NYS Regions

Watertown, NY – The Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) is informing the community that measles cases in rural areas of New York State (NYS) are increasing. To date, 23 cases have been confirmed outside of New York City. Some cases have been linked to travel outside of NYS and others have been shown to be transmitted locally. No laboratory-confirmed cases have been reported in Jefferson County at this time.

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that can cause serious illness, including pneumonia and hospitalization. The best way to prevent measles is to get vaccinated. The two-dose measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is highly effective at preventing disease. Unvaccinated individuals, including infants too young for vaccination (under 12 months of age), and immunocompromised residents face the highest risk of measles infection.

Measles is caused by a virus that is spread by coughing or sneezing into the air. It can remain in the air for up to two hours, making it very contagious. Less commonly, it can also spread by touching a contaminated surface then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. Symptoms usually appear 7 to 14 days after exposure (and up to 21 days). Symptoms include high fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes. 3-5 days after these symptoms begin, a rash occurs. It usually begins on the face at the hairline, then spreads downward to the neck, torso, limbs and feet. The rash often is accompanied by a fever of 104 °F or higher. Complications of measles could include pneumonia, encephalitis, miscarriage or preterm birth, and immune amnesia.

If you or your child develops these symptoms and you think it could be measles, call your healthcare provider. Do not seek medical care without first calling and notifying the office/emergency department. Because measles spreads easily through the air, it is important to notify them by phone first so they can take appropriate steps to prevent measles from spreading.

We encourage residents to check their vaccination status with their medical provider. JCPHS also offers MMR vaccine; including to those without health insurance through the Vaccines for Adults (VFA) and Vaccines for Children (VFC) programs. Please visit

<https://www.jeffersoncountyny.gov/ImmunizationServices> or call 315-786-3700 for more information.

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