

## NEWS RELEASE

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## First Confirmed Case of Measles in Georgia *Infant Recently Traveled from Overseas*

**ATLANTA** – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is confirming the state’s first reported case of measles since 2012. The infected infant arrived in Atlanta from outside of the U.S. and is being cared for at Egleston at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA). DPH is working with CHOA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify anyone who may have been exposed to the patient and to prevent further spread of measles.

Measles is a highly contagious, serious respiratory disease. It is particularly dangerous for infants who cannot be immunized until they are at least six months old and young children who have only received one dose of measles vaccine.

Measles spreads when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes and respiratory droplets travel through the air. Measles virus can live in the air and on surfaces for two to three hours. Almost everyone who has not been vaccinated will get measles if they are exposed to the virus.

Symptoms of measles include:

- Fever (can be very high)
- Cough, runny nose and red eyes
- Tiny white spots on the inner lining of the cheek – also called Koplik’s spots
- Rash of tiny, red spots that start at the head and spreads to the rest of the body (spots may become joined together as they spread)

Measles generally can be prevented through vaccination. The measles vaccine (MMR) is highly effective, in most cases about 97 percent effective.

“Keeping immunization levels high is critical to preventing outbreaks or sustained transmission in Georgia,” said Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health. “More than 98 percent of children heading into kindergarten in our state have received all school required vaccines, which includes two doses of measles vaccine.”

Doctors recommend 2 doses of MMR vaccine for best protection. The first dose is given to children 12-15 months old, the second dose between 4-6 years. Students at colleges and universities who do not have evidence of immunity against measles need two doses of MMR vaccine, separated by at least 28 days. Adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine, especially if they are considering travel outside of the U.S. or were born in the early 1960’s when a less effective vaccine was used. A simple blood test can determine if a person has measles immunity.



Measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, because of high population immunity achieved by very effective measles vaccine coverage. But measles still exists in many parts of the world, and outbreaks can occur in the U.S. when unvaccinated individuals or groups are exposed to imported measles virus. Since 2002, there have been 11 reported cases of measles in Georgia - including this current one - all were imported cases or linked to an imported case.

DPH also continues to closely monitor the large, multi-state measles outbreak linked to Disneyland Resort Theme Parks in California. Since January 1, 2015, more than 100 people from at least 14 states were reported to have measles, the majority of them with ties to the Disneyland outbreak. Most of the case-patients were unvaccinated or had unknown vaccination status. This current Georgia case is unrelated to that outbreak.

“We don’t need to be alarmists. We need to be aware,” said Patrick O’Neal, M.D., director of Health Protection at the Georgia Department of Public Health. “What happened in Disneyland is an alert that we live in a world now in which international travel is very common and frequent, and diseases are only hours away.”

For more information about measles and measles vaccine visit [www.dph.ga.gov](http://www.dph.ga.gov).

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#### **About the Georgia Department of Public Health**

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency in preventing disease, injury and disability; promoting health and well-being; and preparing for and responding to disasters from a health perspective. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years of consolidation with other departments. At the state level, DPH functions through numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices. Locally, DPH funds and collaborates with Georgia’s 159 county health departments and 18 public health districts. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH’s main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information about DPH, visit [www.dph.georgia.gov](http://www.dph.georgia.gov).