



Health Alert



City of Chicago
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

www.chicagohan.org

Chicago Department of Public Health
Allison Arwady MD MPH, Commissioner

Possible Measles Exposure at O'Hare International Airport November 13, 2020

Summary and Action Items

- Progress towards measles elimination with vaccination has stalled amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a [sharp increase in the number of new measles infections worldwide](#) – the highest number reported in 23 years.
- Healthcare providers should ask patients with symptoms consistent with measles about travel through the locations listed below on November 4, 2020.
- Measles diagnosis is based on clinical and epidemiological factors, with laboratory measles RT-PCR confirmation.
- **If you are considering testing a patient for measles, please call 311 and ask for the Communicable Disease Medical Director on-call for further guidance.** Do not order antibody titers alone if you have clinical suspicion.
- [Measles RT-PCR must be coordinated](#) through the Illinois Department of Public Health Laboratory in Chicago.

Background: On November 12, 2020, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) was notified that a family with a 13 month-old unvaccinated child contagious with laboratory-confirmed measles transferred flights and moved between terminals at O'Hare International Airport. The child and family were returning to the US from a visit to an international location. Travelers through O'Hare on the date and times noted below who have received standard childhood vaccines do not need to take action, but those who are unvaccinated should check their immunization records and reach out to their health care provider if they develop symptoms of measles. There is no ongoing risk to the public from this exposure.

Potential Exposures: Below are the public locations where the individual spent time while infectious. Two hours have been added to the times after the individual left the locations, as measles virus can remain infectious in the air and on surfaces for two hours after an infected person leaves the area.

Date	Time	Location
November 4, 2020	6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	O'Hare International Airport, Terminal 5
	6:00 pm – 9:30 pm	O'Hare International Airport, Terminal 3

Symptoms: Patients typically present initially with a prodrome: fever plus conjunctivitis, coryza, cough and Koplik spots (small spots with white centers on an erythematous base on the buccal mucosa). A characteristic red blotchy rash appears as early as the 3rd day of symptoms; the rash typically begins on the face, then becomes generalized, and lasts 4-7 days.

Transmission: Measles is a highly communicable viral disease. Transmission is airborne by droplet spread. Incubation period is about 10 days (range 7-21 days) from exposure to onset of fever, and usually 14 days until rash appears. Period of communicability is 4 days before rash appearance until 4 days after rash appearance.

Diagnosis: Usually based on clinical and epidemiological factors, with laboratory confirmation.

- If you are considering testing a patient for measles, please call CDPH for further guidance. Measles RT-PCR must be coordinated through the Illinois Department of Public Health Laboratory in Chicago.
- Visit www.chicagohan.org/measles for additional information on testing and diagnosis guidance.

Travel Guidance: With the release of [Protect Chicago](#) yesterday, Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Commissioner Arwady advised all Chicagoans not to travel and to cancel any traditional Thanksgiving gatherings during this second COVID-19 surge. **Non-essential travel during this phase of the COVID-19 pandemic is discouraged.**