

The Northwest Georgia Epidemiology Center



Epi Disease Spotlight: Measles Cases Rise in Georgia as U.S. Sees Major Increase in 2026



Measles Resurgence Reaches Historic Levels

Measles, a disease the United States declared eliminated in 2000, is showing a significant resurgence across the country. In 2026, the number of confirmed measles cases reached its highest level since 1992, according to national data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

As of Sept. 10, the CDC had reported 3,294 confirmed measles cases in the United States in 2026, including cases reported across 47 jurisdictions and 16 cases among international visitors. The agency has also reported 38 new outbreaks this year, with 95% of confirmed cases associated with outbreaks.

The 2026 total has already surpassed the 2,289 cases reported during all of 2025. In 2024, the United States recorded 285 confirmed cases. That

makes the current resurgence more than a year-to-year increase. It represents the highest number of reported U.S. measles cases in more than three decades.

Georgia Is Seeing the Same Trend

Georgia is also experiencing a notable increase. The state has recorded 16 confirmed measles cases so far in 2026, compared with 10 cases in 2025 and six in 2024. Georgia reported zero cases in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

The 16 cases reported through Sept. 17 make 2026 Georgia's second-highest annual measles case count since 2014, behind 2019, when the state recorded 18 cases and 2026 is not over yet. Georgia's recent numbers show how quickly measles activity can return after several years with few or no reported cases.

The state's cases are also part of the

broader national picture. Georgia's 16 cases are a small share of the 3,294 confirmed nationwide, but the state's increase is occurring during a year in which measles activity has reached its highest level in decades nationally.

Why Measles Can Spread So Quickly and Cause Complications

Measles is one of the most contagious diseases. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This can happen even up to 2 hours after that person has left.

The highly contagious nature of measles makes protecting vulnerable people especially important. Infants who are too young to receive their routine MMR vaccination and people with weakened immune systems may be at greater risk because they may not be fully protected against the virus.

For those who become infected, measles can lead to serious health complications, particularly among children younger than 5 years old. More common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. In more serious cases, measles can cause pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and, in some cases, death.

What Can You Do?

1. Check your vaccination records
 - The MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella.
 - Check **Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services for immunization records**
 - <https://www.grits.state.ga.us/production/>

2. Make sure children receive both MMR doses, the CDC recommends:

- First MMR dose: 12–15 months of age
- Second MMR dose: 4–6 years of age

3. Adults should check their immunity

- If you are unsure whether you are protected, talk with a health care provider about your vaccination history, immunity testing, and whether you need another dose.

4. Take extra precautions after possible exposure

- If you think you have been exposed to measles, **call your local health department or a health care provider before going to a doctor's office, hospital or public health clinic.** This allows medical staff to take precautions to prevent exposing other patients and staff.

5. Know the symptoms

Measles typically begins with:

- High fever (as high as 105 F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red or watery eyes
- Sore throat
- White spot inside the mouth
- A rash generally appears 3 to 5 days after first symptoms



Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html>

<https://dph.georgia.gov/epidemiology/acute-disease-epidemiology/vaccine-preventable-diseases/measles-clinical-guidance-and>

HIV PEP & PrEP: What's that?

Did you know there are medications available that can help prevent HIV? PrEP and PEP are highly effective tools for reducing the risk of HIV when taken as prescribed and used appropriately.

PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is medication taken by people who may be exposed to HIV to help prevent an HIV infection before exposure occurs. PrEP may be an option if you have had anal or vaginal sex within the past 6 months, inject drugs, or have previously taken PEP and may continue to have potential exposure to HIV.

PEP, or post-exposure prophylaxis, is a short course of medication taken after a potential exposure to HIV. PEP should be started as soon as possible and no later than 72 hours after a potential exposure. Because PEP is intended for emergency use, it is important to seek medical care quickly if you think you may have been exposed to HIV.

PrEP and PEP are available through many private healthcare providers. If you are interested in these services through public health, contact your local health department to learn about available services and how to get connected with care.

There are currently three FDA-approved PrEP options: Truvada and Descovy, which are pills, and Apretude, which is an injectable medication. The right option can depend on factors such as your health, medications, and how you may be exposed to HIV.

More tools than ever are **available** to **prevent HIV**.



Your healthcare provider can help you understand the potential benefits and side effects of your PrEP or PEP medication.

Knowing about HIV prevention is important, but so is understanding what is happening in our own community. While official 2026 data is not yet available, we have observed an increase in confirmed HIV cases within our community. We have also seen an increase in new diagnoses among younger individuals, including those in their late teens and early twenties.

A significant proportion of these cases involve men who have sex with men (MSM), as well as individuals who identify as Black/African American or Hispanic. Substance use, including injection drug use, is also prevalent in the community and may increase the risk of HIV transmission.

These trends highlight the continued importance of HIV testing, prevention, education, and early linkage to care.

For more information, please visit:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/prevention/prep.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/prevention/pep.html>

Planning Ahead for the Season

The holidays can be hectic and stressful. Plan ahead for the season by writing a list and checking it twice. Santa won't mind. Want to get a seasonal influenza, COVID-19, or RSV vaccine? Schedule one soon as the season is here. Check with your local health department, pharmacy, or private physician office.

Write your shopping list now to get some items in case someone gets sick this season. Soup, bottled water, electrolyte drinks, over the counter fever reducing medication, thermometer, hand soap, lotion, paper towels, tissue, disinfectant spray, and more can help you stay ahead and prepared of what could come.

Planning your holiday meals or festive food? Write a list of all the ingredients needed. Look in the pantry for expired items and replace if needed. Check batteries in flashlights and smoke detectors. Don't forget about items outside. Clean gutters of debris and seal windows and doors to stay warm.

Before cold weather arrives, move garden hoses to a garage or storage area and cover outdoor water spickets. Plan ahead for your vehicle if you get ice on the windshield. An extra blanket, coat, bottled drinks, and non perishable food can easily store in your trunk if traveling in cold weather.

Santa could not go anywhere without the help of his furry friends. Our pets need water and food, as well as a plan for those cold winter days and nights.

Ready, set, plan, and go!



For more information, please visit:

The GA Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency:
<https://gema.georgia.gov/winter>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/index.html>

Public Health Reporting Resources for Community Partners

Our Epidemiology team has developed several helpful resources tailored to the needs of different healthcare and community partners. These guides are designed to make public health reporting requirements easier to understand and provide quick access to important guidance and additional resources.

We invite you to explore the resources below:

Public Health Reporting for Correctional Facilities Medical Packet

- Includes information on notifiable disease reporting, syphilis testing, HIV and hepatitis C reporting, follow-up requirements, and additional resources.
- https://nwgapublichealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Correctional-Facility-Medical-Packet_04_22_2026.pdf

Public Health Reporting for Obstetrics and Gynecology for Office Managers

- Provides reporting guidance and resources specific to OBGYN practices, including information on syphilis and HIV testing during pregnancy, congenital syphilis prevention, and reporting requirements.

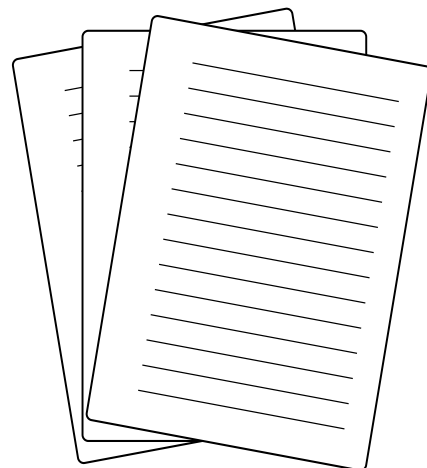
https://nwgapublichealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/EPI-OB-Office-Manager-Packet_04_22_2026.pdf

Public Health Reporting and Resources for School Nurses

- A resource designed to support school nurses with public health reporting and related guidance.
- https://nwgapublichealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Public-Health-Reporting-and-Resources-for-School-Nurses_09_08_2026.pdf

Public Health Reporting and Resources for Daycares

- Provides public health reporting information and resources relevant to daycare settings.
- https://nwgapublichealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Public-Health-Reporting-and-Resources-for-Daycare_09_08_2026.pdf



!!! Health Alerts !!!

GA DPH Measles Health Alert

- GA DPH Measles Alert

The GA Department of Public Health has confirmed 10 cases of measles in Cobb County since August 18, 2026. All cases were either unvaccinated or under-vaccinated.

For more information, please go to the following website:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/epidemiology/epidemiology-emergency-preparedness/gahan>

CDC Health Alerts

- No recent alerts

For more information on previous alerts, please visit the website below:

cdc.gov/han/php/about/

Isolate, Identify, and Inform

To report routine notifiable disease cases, staff can send the information 24/7 to:

- Our confidential fax number: 706-802-5342
- Electronically in SendSS, <https://sendss.state.ga.us/newsendss/index.html>

For a complete list of reportable conditions or for more information please visit:

<https://dph.georgia.gov/epidemiology/disease-reporting>

Reporting Notifiable Disease Conditions to NW GA Public Health

All reports should include the patient's name, date of birth, address, phone number, copy of lab result(s), symptoms, treatment, pregnancy status, and any other pertinent information pertaining to the condition.

Report all suspect measles cases immediately by phone.

- During normal business hours, call 706-295-6656 and select option 0.
- During after hours, holidays, and weekends call the GA Public Health Hotline at 1-866-PUB-HLTH or 1-866-782-4584 and ask to speak with a medical epidemiologist.

***Do not wait until lab results come back to report a measles case to public health staff.**

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