



Messenger

Update: Relentless Measles Virus

ProMed Digest [reported](#) on June 10 that the United States outbreak of measles virus infection—the worst in a quarter century—has spread to Idaho and Virginia.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recorded](#) 1,077 cases of the disease in 2019 as of June 20, in an outbreak federal officials have blamed on misinformation about vaccines. This outbreak, which has reached 28 states, is the worst in the U.S. since 2,126 cases were recorded in 1992. Federal health officials attribute this year's outbreak to vaccine refusal based on fears, contrary to scientific evidence, that ingredients in the vaccine can cause autism.

"We cannot say this enough: Vaccines are a safe and highly effective public health tool that can prevent this disease and end the current outbreak," said Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar in a [recent statement](#).

Measles was declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2000, meaning there was no continuous transmission of the disease for one year. Still, cases of the virus occur and spread via travelers from countries where measles is common. CDC officials have warned that the U.S. risks losing its measles elimination status if the ongoing outbreak, which began in October 2018 in New York, continues until October 2019.

Rash illness cases—especially with exposure to a known measles case—should prompt inquiries with the communicable disease staff at the Public Health Department. Call 805-781-5500 (Monday-Friday, 8:00-5:00) or 805-781-4553 (on weekends and after hours).

In recent weeks, scientists at the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory have detected several measles-positive patients, all in support of the Santa Barbara Public Health Department's efforts to control the spread of the rash illness in Santa Barbara county residents and visitors. The last confirmed case of measles in SLO County was in May 2018.

Rapid, reliable measles or mumps virus PCR testing is performed by the Public Health Laboratory staff in the space of a few hours. For collection supplies, contact the laboratory at 805-781-5507.

Congo

On June 13, the CDC activated its emergency operations center to support the inter-agency response to the current Ebola virus outbreak in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The outbreak is now the second largest ever recorded.

ProMed [reports](#) on the epidemiological situation of Ebola virus in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, as of June 11: Since the beginning of the epidemic, the cumulative number of cases is 2,084, including 1,990 confirmed and 94 probable. In total, there have been 1,405 deaths (1,311 confirmed and 94 probable) and 579 people have recovered. Recent developments include:

- 339 suspected cases are under investigation
- 13 new cases have been confirmed
- 9 new deaths of confirmed cases have been reported, including 7 deaths in the community and 2 in Ebola Treatment Centers
- 4 new recoveries have been confirmed, with patients released from Ebola Treatment Centers

ProMed also reports on a case of Ebola virus in Uganda. The patient who contracted the first confirmed case of Ebola in Uganda, a 5-year-old boy, passed away on the morning of June 12. His dignified and safe burial took place on June 13 in Kasese, the district where he lived with his parents. Laboratory tests have confirmed Ebola virus Zaire as the infecting agent.

CDC now reports a total of three cases in Uganda, all associated with travel to the neighboring DRC.

Questions?

Please contact the Laboratory Director at 805-781-5512 or jbeebe@co.slo.ca.us.

County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory
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