

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COUNTY HEALTH COMMISSIONER: CHECK YOUR MEASLES VACCINE STATUS
Westchester County Health Department Offers Free MMR Vaccine To Under and Uninsured

(White Plains, NY) – With the largest measles outbreak in the state in decades underway in nearby Rockland County, Westchester County Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler recommended County residents verify their own measles vaccine status, and assured County residents that the Health Department is closely monitoring the situation.

Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “We are in close communication with Rockland County and New York State health officials and are prepared to respond should any cases develop here. Measles is very contagious and can be dangerous for anyone who is unvaccinated or whose natural immunity is suppressed. Now is a good time to check with your doctor about your own and your children’s measles vaccine status, and to get the MMR vaccine if you are not up to date.”

The MMR vaccine provides protection from measles, mumps and rubella. The County Health Department offers appointments for MMR vaccine at no cost for children and adults who are under-insured, uninsured or are college students. To schedule a Friday vaccine visit at the County clinics in Yonkers or White Plains, call (914) 995-5800.

Individuals are considered protected or immune to measles if they have had a lab test confirming immunity. Those born before 1957, and those who have medical documentation of having received two doses of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine, are also considered immune. Children usually get the first dose of MMR vaccine when they are 12 to 15 months old and again when they are 4 to 6 years old.

If you are unsure if you are immune to measles, contact your healthcare provider. Two doses of the MMR vaccine can offer 97% protection from the measles.

Amler added: “Anyone planning to travel overseas with a child six months or older who has not yet received a first dose of MMR should talk with their child’s doctor about getting the vaccine before leaving the U.S. This will provide some protection against measles outbreaks abroad. Your child will still need two doses of MMR at the regular time.”

To check the latest travel notices about measles, go to www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html

In New York State, measles immunization is required of children enrolled in schools, daycare and pre-kindergarten. Since August 1990, college students have also been required to demonstrate immunity against measles.

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus that is spread by direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected people. Measles can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children, as it can lead to pneumonia, brain damage, deafness and death. Others who are at high risk for complications if they get the measles include pregnant women who are not immune, as well as those who are immunocompromised or immunosuppressed (when your body can't fight disease). About one out of four people who get measles will be hospitalized.

Symptoms include a fever, rash, cough, conjunctivitis (red watery eyes) or runny nose. People are considered infectious from four days before to four days after the appearance of the rash. Symptoms usually appear 10-12 days after exposure but may appear as early as 7 days and as late as 21 days after exposure.

If you think you may have been exposed and have symptoms consistent with measles, contact your health care provider, a local clinic, or a local emergency department **before** going for care. This will help to prevent others from being exposed.

Health care providers should immediately report all suspect cases of measles in Westchester to the Westchester County Department of Health Communicable Disease Program staff at (914) 813-5180 during regular business hours, or (914) 813-5000 after hours/weekends. For more health information, go to www.westchestergov.com/health.

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About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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