



# County of San Diego

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PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

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Dear Community Member,

A very large measles outbreak is currently occurring in the Philippines. We are asking for your help in getting this message about measles and the risk of travel to and from the Philippines out to a wide audience. Measles can be prevented with vaccination!

The Philippine Department of Health has reported 20,308 measles cases, including 301 deaths, from January 1 to March 12, 2019. Over half of the measles cases are under five years of age. Most of the cases are from Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Western Visayas, and Central Visayas. Other regions also have increasing numbers of measles cases and are at risk for outbreaks if the epidemic is not contained.

The best way to protect against measles is to get the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. It is safe, effective and has been used for more than 50 years. We recommend that infants 6-11 months old who are traveling to the Philippines (or other countries where measles is circulating) get one dose of MMR vaccine before travel. Infants who are 12 months of age or older should receive two doses of MMR vaccine at least 28 days apart before travel (the early second dose still counts for school entry). Adults who have only received one dose of MMR vaccine (usually people over 40 years of age) should receive a second dose before travel. If someone is going to the Philippines as part of a medical mission and has received two doses of MMR vaccine, they should get a blood test (measles titer) checked before going to be sure that they are immune.

There are immunization campaigns currently underway in the Philippines, so friends or family who are traveling from there should be sure to be up-to-date with MMR before leaving.

Anyone developing a fever, especially with a rash, within three weeks of having been in the Philippines, should see a medical doctor. Before seeing a doctor, it is very important to call ahead to mention the possibility of measles so that appropriate infection control steps can be taken.

Lastly, travelers should check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Traveler's Health website (<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>) to learn about the latest advice and travel advisories about infectious diseases, when going ANYWHERE overseas. Here is the current notice on the measles outbreak in the Philippines: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/watch/measles-philippines>.

Measles is highly contagious. When ill persons sneeze or cough, the measles virus can stay in the air for up to two hours and cause new infections in persons who are not immune. Most persons with measles recover, but the illness can lead to death because of pneumonia, acute diarrhea with severe dehydration, or acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain).

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In summary, before travel to the Philippines:

- Persons who have never been vaccinated against measles should receive two doses of MMR vaccine at least 28 days apart.
- Persons, including children 12 months of age and older, who have only received one dose of MMR vaccine should receive a second dose at least 28 days after the first dose.
- Infants aged 6-11 months should receive one dose of MMR.
- Talk to your doctor about other vaccines you or your family might need, like Tdap (whooping cough booster) and varicella (chickenpox).
- Keep copies of vaccination records for all family members.

You can learn more about measles by visiting the CDC website: [www.cdc.gov/measles](http://www.cdc.gov/measles)

Find more information about immunizations and the diseases they prevent at the Immunization Program website: [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org)

Please share this information with your families, friends, colleagues, and others in your personal and professional networks.

Thank you for taking important steps to help ensure the health of your family, friends, and the San Diego community and beyond!

  
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