Measles in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Warning - Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel
Alert - Level 2, Practice Enhanced Precautions
Watch - Level 1, Practice Usual Precautions

What is the current situation?

An ongoing measles outbreak has been reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with approximately 17,000 cases and nearly 300 deaths. The number of cases has dramatically increased in 2015; most have been reported in Katanga Province.

CDC recommends that travelers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo protect themselves by making sure they are vaccinated against measles, particularly infants 6–11 months of age (1 dose of measles vaccine) and children 12 months of age or older (2 doses of measles vaccine). Clinicians should keep measles in mind when treating patients with fever and rash, especially if the patient has recently traveled internationally.

What can travelers do to protect themselves?

Get measles vaccine

- People who cannot show that they were vaccinated as children and who have never had measles should be vaccinated.
- Infants 6–11 months of age should have 1 dose of measles vaccine if traveling internationally.
  - Children in the United States routinely receive measles vaccination at 12–15 months of age.
  - Infants vaccinated before age 12 months should be revaccinated on or after their first birthday with 2 doses, separated by at least 28 days.
- Children 12 months of age or older should have 2 doses, separated by at least 28 days.
- Adolescents and adults who have not had measles or have not been vaccinated should get 2 doses, separated by at least 28 days.
- Two doses of MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine is nearly 100% effective at preventing measles.
MMR has been used safely and effectively since the 1970s. A few people experience temporary mild adverse reactions, such as joint pain, after the vaccination, but serious side effects are extremely rare. No link between MMR and autism has been found.

See Vaccine Information Statements (VIS) for more information about measles, the vaccine, and who should and should not get vaccinated.

Practice hygiene and cleanliness

- Wash your hands often.
- If soap and water aren’t available, clean your hands with hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol).
- Don’t touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you need to touch your face, make sure your hands are clean.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Try to avoid close contact, such as kissing, hugging, or sharing utensils or cups, with people who are sick.

If you feel sick and think you may have measles:

- Talk to your doctor or nurse if you feel seriously ill, especially if you have a fever.
  - Tell him or her about your travel.
  - For more information about medical care abroad, see Getting Health Care Abroad.
- Avoid contact with other people while you are sick.

Traveler Information

- [CDC Measles Homepage](https://www.cdc.gov/measles)
- [Measles Webpage for Travelers](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/measles.html)
- [Measles Vaccination Information](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/measles_vaccination.html)
- [MMR Vaccine Information Statement](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/).pdf

Clinician Information

- [Measles (Rubeola)](https://www.cdc.gov/mmr/vaccine.html) in CDC’s Yellow Book
- Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) Recommendations for MMR vaccine and MMRV vaccine
- Measles Laboratory and Tools
- Chapter 7: Measles--Manual for Surveillance of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases