

Measles and Pregnancy

Measles activity continues to increase in Minnesota and nationally. Providers serving pregnant patients may find it helpful to review key considerations related to measles risk and patient counseling. This document highlights best practices and current guidance to support preparedness and timely clinical support related to measles and pregnancy.

Measles risks in pregnancy and congenital measles

Measles infection during pregnancy is associated with increased risks for the pregnant woman and the fetus, including pregnancy loss, preterm delivery, and low birth weight.

Congenital measles can occur when maternal measles infection happens close to delivery. Symptoms can range from asymptomatic to classic rash illness or severe, multisystem disease and death. Typical signs include fever, rash, and jaundice, though the maculopapular rash may be atypical, delayed, or absent due to the infant's immature immune response or passive maternal antibodies. Other possible symptoms include thrombocytopenia (low blood platelet count), pneumonia, and neurologic complications. Neurological complications can occur after acute illness. For more information about congenital measles, visit [American Academy of Pediatrics Red Book Online: Congenital Measles: Frequently Asked Questions](https://publications.aap.org/redbook/resources/35976/Congenital-Measles-Frequently-Asked-Questions) (<https://publications.aap.org/redbook/resources/35976/Congenital-Measles-Frequently-Asked-Questions>).

These risks emphasize the importance of determining immunity in patients of reproductive age and supporting timely prevention and management.

Assessing immunity in reproductive-age patients

Providers are encouraged to assess measles immunity during routine care.

- Patients who are not pregnant and lack evidence of immunity should be encouraged to receive a measles mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine.
- Postpartum patients without immunity should receive MMR at discharge or follow-up.
- MMR should not be administered during pregnancy.

Guidance for pregnant patients in areas with measles activity

Providers may consider counseling susceptible pregnant patients on:

- Avoiding contact with people who have suspected or confirmed measles or who were recently exposed.
- Seeking clinical guidance promptly if an exposure occurs.
- Ensuring they know how to access after-hours clinical consultation services if questions arise.

Exposure management, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and vitamin A considerations

When a susceptible pregnant patient is exposed to measles, prompt clinical evaluation is essential. Intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) is recommended for exposed pregnant patients who lack evidence of immunity and timing is critical to maximize benefit. Providers may reference [Measles Post-Exposure Prophylaxis \(PEP\) for Non-Symptomatic Susceptible Contacts](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/measlespep.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/measles/hcp/measlespep.pdf) which outlines IG indications and timing. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will work with you to determine whether a patient is eligible for PEP.

Vitamin A does not prevent or treat measles on its own and is not a substitute for vaccination. People who are pregnant or may become pregnant should not exceed 10,000 IU of preformed vitamin A daily, as higher doses before or early in pregnancy increase the risk of birth defects.

Additional resources

- [ACOG: Measles in Pregnancy: A Preventable Threat \(www.acog.org/education-and-events/webinars/measles-in-pregnancy-a-preventable-threat\)](http://www.acog.org/education-and-events/webinars/measles-in-pregnancy-a-preventable-threat)
- [ACOG: Measles, Mumps, Rubella \(MMR\) Vaccination and Management of Obstetric–Gynecologic Patients During a Measles Outbreak \(www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2024/03/management-of-obstetric-gynecologic-patients-during-a-measles-outbreak\)](http://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2024/03/management-of-obstetric-gynecologic-patients-during-a-measles-outbreak)
- [Health Alert Network \(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/index.html)

Minnesota Department of Health
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us/measles

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