



## US measles outbreak concentrated among unvaccinated children

For the latest numbers for the Washington outbreak see

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/IllnessandDisease/Measles/MeaslesOutbreak>

For more on vaccination rates in Washington see <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/348-682-SY2017-18immunizationgraphs.pdf>

Measles was declared eliminated from the USA in 2000, but small outbreaks continue to be reported annually, ranging from a low of 37, in 2004, to 667, in 2014.

As 2019 begins, a measles outbreak has been reported in Washington state, and the number of cases has been steadily increasing. As of Feb 11, there have been 54 confirmed cases, according to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and all but one have occurred in Clark County, which borders on the state of Oregon. There are an additional 11 unconfirmed cases plus four confirmed related cases in Oregon.

"We are seeing new cases every day", said Liz Coleman, a spokesperson for the DOH. "Most of the cases occurred in individuals who were not

vaccinated, and primarily, among unvaccinated children. For the others, we just can't confirm their vaccination status."

Of the 53 patients in Clark County, 47 were not vaccinated, five were unverified, and one person had been immunised. One patient has been admitted to hospital and none have died.

Vaccinations are required for school entry, but all US states allow exemptions for medical reasons and almost all grant religious exemptions. However, 17 states, including Washington and Oregon, also allow philosophical exemptions for those who object to vaccines on the basis of personal, moral, or other beliefs. Washington state has one of the highest exemption rates in the

country, with nearly 5% of all children enrolled in the school system opting out of immunisations. In Clark County, the rate is even higher, at 7.9% for the 2017–18 school year. State lawmakers have proposed legislation that would ban exemptions for philosophical or personal beliefs.

Coleman says that an emergency response has been activated and that the governor has declared a state of emergency. "We are providing Clark County with assistance, and helping to contain the spread of measles", she said. "The vaccination rate is lower than we'd like to see."

As of Feb 7, four other outbreaks been reported in the USA in 2019: three in New York, and one in Texas.

*Roxanne Nelson*



## Infectious disease surveillance update

For more on Leptospirosis in Fiji see <https://fijisun.com.fj/2019/02/09/98-cases-four-deaths-from-leptospirosis/>

For more on MERS in Saudi Arabia see <https://www.promedmail.org/post/6306743>

For more on pertussis in Panama see <http://outbreaknewstoday.com/pertussis-outbreak-ngabe-bugle-panama-80926/>

For more on echinococcosis in Russia see <http://outbreaknewstoday.com/russia-echinococcus-outbreak-suvorov-guardians-military-academy-ulyanovsk-67083/>

For more on Ebola virus disease in the DRC see <https://www.promedmail.org/post/6307023>

### Leptospirosis in Fiji

The Fiji Ministry of the Health and Medical Services declared an outbreak of leptospirosis on Jan 28. Since the beginning of the year, 98 cases have been reported, including four deaths. Most patients have been younger than 30 years of age. Those who work with animals are usually more at risk; however, recent heavy rains and flooding have been attributed as the likely route of infection for the patients who do not do animal-related work.

### MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia

Since the beginning of the year, 40 cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection have been reported in Saudi Arabia. On Feb 7–8, 13 additional cases were reported by the Saudi Ministry of Health. Two were primary cases, one of whom had a history of contact with camels. The remaining

11 cases were secondary. A patient in Al Qasim likely had had contact with another patient whose diagnosis was confirmed on Jan 30. In Wadi Al Dawasir, six secondary cases were identified through screening of contacts of other patients, one was a household contact, and the remaining five were considered to be health-care associated infections.

### Pertussis in Panama

An outbreak of Pertussis has been reported in the Ngäbe-Buglé region of Panama. Between mid-December and February 1, 81 confirmed cases of pertussis have been reported including nine deaths in children aged younger than 2 years who died from complications. All the patients who died were from the Loma Yuca part of the region, which is difficult to access, hampering efforts to collect data on the patients and control the outbreak.

### Echinococcosis in Russia

31 cadets from a military school in Ulyanovsk, Russia, have been identified with echinococcosis of the lungs. The echinococcus tapeworm is typically found in carnivorous predators, including dogs; the infections have been linked to contact with dogs.

### Ebola in DR Congo update

As of Feb 7, 800 cases of Ebola have now been reported in DR Congo since the outbreak began in August 2018. 739 cases are confirmed and the remaining 61 classified as probable. Cases have been reported from 20 health zones in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. Ebola cases have also been reported in the national army in Butembo town: two soldiers posted in Butembo airport were confirmed positive on Jan 12, both of whom have now recovered.

*Ruth Zwizwai*