Measles Frequently Asked Questions for K-12 School Officials

What are the symptoms of measles?

Initial symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, and red watery eyes. Koplik spots (tiny white spots inside the mouth) may also appear two to three days after symptoms first appear.

Two to four days later a rash follows and lasts five to six days. Rash appears as a

- flat red rash (sometimes raised bumps on top of flat red lesions), and
- begins on the head and face and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet.
- Fever may spike to more than 104°F when rash appears.

After a few days, the fever subsides and rash fades.

What is the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccination requirement for students attending K-12 schools in Iowa?

Iowa law requires that all students be vaccinated with two doses of measles and rubella containing vaccine (MMR vaccine) at the time of enrollment (kindergarten or whenever students transfer into an Iowa school). To be considered valid, the first dose of MMR vaccine must be administered on or after one year of age, and the second dose must be administered at least 28 days after the first dose (usually given at four to six years of age).

Iowa law allows for provisional enrollment if a student has received at least one dose of MMR or is a transfer student seeking enrollment from one U.S. elementary or secondary school into another. A provisional certificate is valid for 60 days, allowing time for the child to receive additional vaccine doses.

Iowa law allows for a four-day “grace period”, which would apply to the minimum age of the first dose (i.e., the vaccine can be given up to four days before the child turns one year of age). The four-day period may also be applied to the 28-day minimum interval between two doses of MMR if the interval is inadvertently shorter than 28 days, although healthcare providers should never plan to administer the second dose earlier than the 28-day minimum interval. This four-day “grace period” does not apply to the strict 28-day minimum interval between two different live vaccines (e.g., MMR and varicella vaccines), if not administered at the same visit.

What types of MMR vaccine exemptions are allowed for students attending K-12 schools in Iowa?

Iowa law allows for the following exemptions:

1. **Religious exemptions**

   Religious exemption stating that immunization conflicts with a genuine and sincere religious belief. A notary signature is no longer required for a certificate of religious exemption to be valid. The exemption is valid for the entire length of time the student attends school (kindergarten through 12th grade).

2. **Medical exemptions**
   Medical exemption stating that immunization would be injurious to the and well-being of the applicant, or any member of the applicant's family or household must be signed by an MD, DO, PA or ARNP to be considered valid. Unless the MD, DO, PA, ARNP specifically lists an expiration date, the medical exemption is valid for the entire length of time the student attends school (kindergarten through 12th grade).

What are the MMR vaccination requirements for staff who work at K-12 schools in Iowa?

Iowa law does not address vaccination requirements for staff working at K-12 schools in Iowa. However, Iowa HHS recommends that all staff be fully vaccinated.

What are the requirements for non-immune persons (including K-12 students and staff) determined to have been exposed to a person with confirmed measles?

In most cases, non-immune persons exposed to a person with confirmed measles will be required under a public health order to stay in their home from five days after the first possible exposure until 21 days after the last possible exposure to the person with confirmed measles.

If a person with confirmed measles is identified in a K-12 school in Iowa, will non-immune students and staff in that K-12 school be excluded from school for a period of time (even if they are *not* identified as having been exposed to the person with confirmed measles)?

Yes, generally non-immune students and staff will be excluded from the school until 21 days after the last possible time a person who had confirmed measles was at the school. Public health officials will work directly with K-12 school officials to determine which exclusions are appropriate. If the non-immune students and staff (who have **not** been identified as exposed to the person with confirmed measles) get vaccinated, they will be allowed to return to school.

Should K-12 school officials in Iowa maintain records of staff MMR vaccination histories?

Iowa law does not require K-12 school officials to maintain measles vaccination records for school staff. However, if a measles case was identified within a school, public health officials would work with school officials to quickly determine which students and staff are non-immune and ensure all susceptible individuals are excluded. Having these records readily available would expedite this determination.

Can K-12 schools in Iowa (either public or private) impose any additional MMR vaccination recommendations, such as denying a religious or medical exemption?

Iowa HHS does not have the legal authority to exclude children who have a valid medical or religious exemption from a school or licensed childcare center unless an emergency or epidemic has been declared. If a school seeks to impose additional requirements, they should consult their own legal counsel prior to doing so to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and federal and state civil rights laws.



If measles is suspected, individuals should promptly seek evaluation from a healthcare provider, call ahead before arriving to prevent further exposure. Ensure any suspected measles cases are reported to the local public health agency.