

Second measles death in US reported by New Mexico health officials

Kevin Reed
7 March 2025

An unvaccinated adult from New Mexico died from measles Thursday according to the state health department. It is the second death from the growing outbreak along the Texas-New Mexico border of the highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the measles virus.

A statement from New Mexico health authorities said:

The deceased, an unvaccinated Lea County adult, tested positive for measles after death and did not seek medical care before passing, according to laboratory confirmation from the NMDOH [New Mexico Department of Health] Scientific Laboratory Division, though the official cause of death remains under investigation by the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator.

Lea County is just over the border from Gaines County, Texas, where the measles outbreak is centered. At least 30 cases of measles have been reported in Lea County, including 26 adults and four children under the age of 17.

The age, sex and underlying medical conditions of the person are currently being withheld. New Mexico health officials also did not disclose if contact tracing is underway to identify others who may have been exposed to the virus.

The measles virus is airborne and spreads easily when an infected person breathes, sneezes or coughs. A person can infect others from four days before the rash onset through four days after the measles rash appears.

The virus can stay in the air for two hours in enclosed

spaces after an infected person has left. The symptoms start with a cough, runny nose, and eye redness, then progress to fever and a rash that starts on the head and spreads down the body.

In total, 228 cases have been confirmed in Texas and New Mexico, but officials have said the actual number is likely much higher. The first death from measles in 10 years occurred on February 26, when a school-aged child died from the virus in West Texas. The child was not vaccinated against the disease.

Of those infected in Texas, 89 of the cases have been among people aged five to 17, while 64 cases have been among children four and younger and 34 among adults over age 18, with the ages of 11 patients not reported. The majority of those infected had not been vaccinated.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "As of March 6, 2025, a total of 222 measles cases were reported by 12 jurisdictions: Alaska, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York City, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington."

Throughout the expanding public health crisis, President Trump's Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has responded with a mixture of "vaccine choice," pseudoscience and indifference. After the child died, Kennedy said that measles outbreaks were common and claimed that two people had already died when Texas officials had only reported one death at the time. He also stated falsely that those in hospital with measles had been placed there for the purpose of quarantine, when in fact they had been hospitalized because of the seriousness of their illness.

In an op-ed on Sunday on Fox News, Kennedy wrote that vaccinations "contribute to community immunity"

from measles and then moved on to emphasize treatments for the disease, saying vitamin A can dramatically reduce deaths.

On Tuesday, during an interview with Fox News, Kennedy claimed that local Texas doctors were “getting very, very good results” by treating their measles patients with a steroid called budesonide, an antibiotic called clarithromycin, and cod liver oil, a supplement high in vitamins A and D.

Responding to Kennedy’s health quackery, Tina Tan, MD, a professor of pediatrics at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University, told the online journal *Health*: “None of those are treatments for measles. Measles is a virus, and there are no antivirals that are licensed for treatment of measles.”

Tuhina Joseph, DO, pediatric infectious disease physician at Tufts Medical Center, told *Health* that cod liver oil is “a nutritional supplement that may have high levels of vitamins and other nutrients that we need, but it certainly has not been used for measles treatment.”

Joseph explained the implications of the distractions being created by Kennedy and others about the measles outbreak, saying:

It [cod liver oil] basically helps your immune system fight measles if you’re vitamin A deficient. If you’re not vitamin A deficient, then it’s not going to do anything.

Dr. Tan added:

The concern is there may be some misinformation out there that vitamin A can actually prevent measles infection, which it absolutely cannot do. Vaccination is really the only effective prevention.

The MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine, when administered in two doses, protects 97 percent of people against measles, 88 percent against mumps and at least 97 percent against rubella (German measles). MMR is used widely around the world, with over 500 million doses administered between 1999 and 2004.

Before immunization with the MMR vaccine, 2.6 million people died per year from the diseases. By 2012, that number had been reduced to 122,000 deaths, mostly in poor countries.

The outbreak of measles in the US is directly traceable to a reduction in vaccinations, especially along the West Texas-New Mexico border where the deaths have occurred. According to the CDC, while kindergarten vaccination exemptions are on the rise across the US and exceeded 3 percent during the 2023-2024 school year, Gaines County, Texas has one of the highest rates in the country, with 17.62 percent of kindergartners receiving exemptions. In one school district in Gaines County, the exemption rate is 47.95 percent, according to the state health department.

As part of the anti-science campaign against vaccinations, the Trump administration is reviving the unsubstantiated claim that MMR vaccinations are responsible for high rates of autism among children.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact