

Measles continues to spread to kids in Kentucky

BY MELISSA PATRICK
KENTUCKY HEALTH NEWS

LOUISVILLE – Another case of measles has been confirmed in Kentucky, bringing the state’s total number of cases this year to 13.

The most recent case is in Jefferson County in a child “who recently traveled internationally to an area with ongoing measles transmissions,” according to Louisville’s health department.

“It’s unknown if the child was vaccinated against measles, said Connie Mendel, Louisville’s chief health strategist,” Kentucky Lantern reports. Eleven of the state’s other 12 cases are in people unvaccinated against measles, and the 12th is in a person who got only one of the recommended two-dose vaccine.

Kentucky’s 13 cases add to the largest outbreak of measles in the U.S. since measles was declared eliminated in the country in 2000. Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports 1,309 confirmed cases in 2025.

Dr. Nicholas Van Sickels (UK HealthCare photo)

Dr. Nicholas Van Sickels, an infectious disease specialist with UK HealthCare, said vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and others from measles.

“If you look at measles outbreaks in general, overwhelmingly, you see that people who are unvaccinated are disproportionately affected

because it is just so, so, so contagious,” he said. “On average, if you have an unvaccinated population, one person can infect 12 to 18 more, and then it just expands.”

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory virus that can cause serious health complications, especially in young children. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and can survive for up to two hours after an infected person leaves an area.

Symptoms of measles include fever, cough, congestion, runny nose and red, watery eyes. Several days after the start of symptoms, a rash occurs. It usually starts on the head and spreads down the body.

The two-dose MMR vaccine is recommended for children at 12 to 15 months old, with a second dose between ages 4 and 6. Two doses of the MMR vaccine are 97% effective against measles, and one dose is estimated to be about 93% effective.

Further, Van Sickels said, the vaccine offers some protection to people who get measles even though they’ve been vaccinated, noting that they will likely have a milder illness and are less likely to spread the disease to other people, including those who can’t get vaccinated.

HERD IMMUNITY

People who can’t get vaccinated against the measles depend on those who can get vaccinated to protect

them from the disease through herd immunity.

“If you have a ton of herd immunity, if you have over 95% of the population protected through vaccination, measles has a tough time taking hold,” Van Sickels said. “Because even if a couple of people get infected, they don’t spread it very well, and the people they try to spread it to are blocking them in most cases because of vaccination.”

This is important, he said, because while most people do recover from measles, “a significant number of people who get complications, such as ear infections, pneumonia, require hospitalization.” And though rare, he said some will die from it, get encephalitis or will have neurologic problems years later.

“And so these are really rare events, but to me, why would you take that chance when those rare events are counterbalanced by a very effective and safe vaccine that has an excellent safety profile?” he said.

Among those who cannot get vaccinated are pregnant women, people who are moderately or severely immunocompromised, people who have had a recent organ transplant, and those who are undergoing chemotherapy or have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant. Further, most children under 12 months of age are not vaccinated.

Van Sickels added that people with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)

should ask their health care provider if they can get the measles vaccine, as this varies from person to person.

TIPS FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN'T GET VACCINATED

Van Sickels said there is a low chance for an unvaccinated person to get measles if they are just out and about town, but if they are spending time in crowded places, traveling on planes or public transportation, or traveling outside the country, they need to protect themselves with basic public health measures.

“If you can wear a simple surgical mask that is protective. Wash your hands regularly. Try to go and be in open-air spaces as much as you can,” he said. “Those are the tools you have if you’re traveling internationally and you have a child that’s less than 12 months old.”

He also noted that children as young as 6 months are eligible to receive the vaccine if traveling internationally.

In late May, the CDC urged Americans to be fully vaccinated against measles at least two weeks before they travel internationally. It also urged people who are not able to get vaccinated to talk to their clinician before traveling and to consider postponing their trip.

WHAT TO DO IF EXPOSED

Van Sickels said it is important for people who have been exposed

to the measles, especially if they are not vaccinated, to call their health care provider and their local public health department.

“Kentucky’s health department has been wonderful with this, in this outbreak. . . . They do that very intensive work of contact tracing, which is tough, and then they will actually help facilitate access to exposure treatment,” he said.

Contact tracing involves finding where the infected person was initially exposed and then making sure all of the people that have since been exposed by the infected person are identified and notified.

VACCINE HESITANCY

The resurgence of measles can be attributed, in part, to declining vaccination rates.

In Kentucky, coverage among kindergartners for the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine for the 2024-2025 school year dropped to 86.9%, which is lower than the national average of 93%. In 2023-2024, that rate was 90% in Kentucky.

Van Sickels said to help people who are vaccine hesitant, he stresses that we have 50-plus years of data on this vaccine about how safe and “overwhelmingly effective” it is.

He also points to the importance of what he called “herd protection.”

“Maybe there’s a child who can’t get it because they have leukemia,” he said. “You getting vaccinated helps that person.”

Anderson golfers excel in Shelbyville tourney

BY THOMAS J. BARR
THE ANDERSON NEWS

SHELBYVILLE – The summer junior golf series wound down to a close with the Rocket Invitational on July 23 at Weissinger Hills Golf Course in Shelbyville.

Several area golfers scored well as they were starting the high school season.

In the boys’ 15-18, South Oldham’s Colton Woosley was the top area finisher. The senior tied for fifth place with a one-under 71.

Collins’ junior Grant Pellows tied for 10th place with a one-over 73. He was tied with North Oldham’s Jack Ballerstedt, a sophomore.

Marion County senior Brayden Spalding tied for 18th place. Also finishing with a four-over 76 were South Oldham senior Chris Parrino and Collins sophomore Asher Smith.

Bethlehem also had a pair of golfers who tied for 18th place. Sophomore Seth Greenwell and junior Owen Horton each had a 76.

North Oldham had three golfers – John Greer, Tyler Duncan and Greyson Willey – who tied in 26th place with Marion County senior Landon Bradshaw with a five-over 77.

At six over 78, Collin senior Grant Roadcap and junior Walker Webb tied with Shelby County senior David Hebdon for 30th place.

Collins sophomore Harrison Ward tied for 34th with a seven-over score of 79.

In 36th place was Shelby County senior Gavin Jewell with his eight-over score of 80.

Shelby County junior Cody Young tied in 40th place with South Oldham senior Nolan Hall with a nine-over 81.

South Oldham senior Brady Rutledge and Collins senior Tommy Rempe tied for 51st place with an 84.

Colton Smith, a senior from Anderson County tied for 55th place with Rowan Whitehouse, a junior from Collins. They had a final score of 87, which was 15 over par.

A group of golfers tied for 59th place. North Oldham sophomore Ryland Hans and Jack Stevenor of Bethlehem had a 15 over par.

Anderson County senior Camden Smith, South Oldham senior Shea McGee and Collins junior Trevor McLaughlin each had an 88.

Slade Hope, a senior from Cornerstone, and Jack Blankenship, a freshman from Bethlehem, tied for 66th with a score of 89.

Collins junior Lucien Barnett was alone in 70th place with a 90.

Anderson County senior Conner Bridges tied for 71st with a 91.

Marion County senior Charlie Mattingly was in a pack that finished tied for 75th with a score of 92.

Anderson County freshman Max Quisenberry and Cornerstone sophomore Tate Mercer tied for 78th place with a 93.

Baylee Ethington of Collins was alone in 80th place with a final score of 94.

Shelby County teammates Zae Bracken and fellow freshman Jaxson Burgin tied with a 98 to finish 82nd.

Shelby County continued to show its depth. Freshman Logan Collins was alone in 84th with a 26-over 98. And Sam Hatter, an eighth grader, was one spot behind with a 102.

Cornerstone senior Kacee Biddle was 86th with a score of 104.

Grayson County eighth-grader Ben Cummins was 88th with a 106 and teammate, junio Maddox Powel was next with a 108.

Shelby County eighth-grader Reid Casey was 37 over par to finished in a tie for 90th place.

In a tie for 92, Grayson County’s Justin Gray, Shelby County’s AJ Brewer and Marion County’s

Hayden Lanham each carted a 111.

Shlby County freshman Carter Hurt was 95th with a 117, while Cornerstone senior Waylor White was one shot behind.

Grayson County’s Noah Dennis was 97th with a 119 and teammate Tyler Hodges was next with 121. Cornerstone sophomore Emerson Hendricks had a 130.

TEAM COMPETITION

North Oldham’s team of Tyler Duncan, John Greer, Jack Ballerstedt, Ryland Hans and Greyson Willey finished in third place with a 304, 16-over.

Bethlehem’s team score of 311 was good enough for sixth place. Those on the team included Seth Greenwell, Miller Osborne, Owen Horton, Jack Blankenship and Jack Stevenson.

With a score of 312, South Oldham finished in seventh place. The scoring members of the Dragon team included Colton Woosley, Chris Parrino, Nolan Hall, Brady Rutledge and Shea McGee.

In eighth place was the team from Collins, who combined for a 313. Team members included Grant Roadcap, Tommy Rempe, Grant Pellows, Walker Webb and Rowan

Whitehouse.

In 11th place was the second team from Collins. Asher Smith, Lucien Barnett, Harrison Wade, Baylee Etherton and Trevor McLaughlin combined for a score of 333.

Shelby County’s team finished in 13th place with a combined score of 339. David Hebdon, Gavin Jewell, Cody Young, Sam Hatter and Logan Collins were the team members.

Anderson County placed 14th with a score of 351. Colton Smith, Eli Cummins, Camden Smith, Max Quisenberry and Conner Bridges made up the Bearcat team.

The Knights of Marion County was next in 15th place with its score of 356. Brayden Spalding, Landon Bradshaw, Hayden Lanham and Charlie Mattingly made up the score.

Cornerstone was 18th with a score of 404. Tate Mercer, Kacee Biddle, Slade Hope, Emerson Hendrick and Waylor White were part of the squad.

Shelby County also had a second team, which finished 19th with a score of 416. Jaxson Burgin, AJ Brewer, Reid Caey, Zae Bracken and Carter Hurt were on the team.

And Ben Cummins, Tyler Hodges, Justin Gray, Maddox Powell and Noah Dennis represented Grayson County and finished in 20th place.

SCHOOL

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school district.

A competitive person, Mitchell understands. She is very proud that the latest round of testing found Anderson County in the top 19 percent in the state and 33rd out of the 171 school districts in the Commonwealth.

BEYOND TEST SCORES

Having a state-recognized band program is one thing Anderson County can hang its hat on. But the superintendent said that students seek involvement in that program, and many others, is due to what they experience and learn while participating.

Mitchell knows that learning in the classroom the key elements of education is still a key. But she said the other opportunities, such as music and the arts, may cater to other students.

“We have a strong music program at all levels,” said Mitchell.

Students in those programs learn things like leadership, teamwork and decision-making.

“Students help each other,” said Mitchell. “Children become leaders.”

Besides those extra-curricular programs, Mitchell said there is a definite move to make sure students are career-ready, in addition to being college ready.

“There is so much more than test scores,” said Mitchell. “We need to prepare our students to excel after they graduate.”

Career pathways have become a point of emphasis as the lesson has been learned that not every student is headed to college.

In working with the needs of the community, Mitchell said the district constantly looks for ways to get students career ready. New pathways in EMS and fire services are geared to help prepare students to work for local agencies.

Teaching soft skills has been a concern of business leaders. Things like attendance, communications and work ethic are part of the learning process at all levels in the district.

Through its working relationship with the local business community, Mitchell said mentoring programs are part of the normal practice. Trying to prepare students with those soft skills are constantly undertaken.

The Anderson County Chamber of Commerce has had a 20-plus year partnership with the school district. The Rotary Club has provided significant financial assistance.

“We have a very strong relationship with the business community,” said Mitchell.

She said there is nothing better to see a Anderson County High School graduate go on and excel in the business world thanks to the

lessons learned locally.

FINANCES

Mitchell said that the increase in the SEEK formula was appreciated. But there is still a need for more funding for Pre-School and transportation. There is also the concern that about \$200,000 in federal funds may be at risk.

She has had a good working relationship with local state Rep. James Tipton and state Sen. Aaron Reed, as well as others in the legislature. The hope is that lawmakers will continue to put faith and financial support to public education.

NEW TO THE DISTRICT

While not new, it is expanded. The district provides Before and After school care and it open to all parents to utilize.

The goal is to remain open on NTI days or during the summer break.

The district is also rolling out its ParentSquare. This is the one-stop way for the district to reach every parent on one platform.

NEW LAWS

The new communications policy for cell phones has been mandated by the General Assembly.

HB 208 will require that cell phones can be taken to school; however, they cannot be used during instructional time.

Mitchell said parents are going to have to be of

assistance to enforce this policy.

There was some work at the high school last year to implement the policy and it is now districtwide.

CONSTRUCTION

There are no construction projects that will interrupt teachers or students in the upcoming school year.

HVAC projects are finishing up at Saffell Street Elementary and the middle school, which also has a new entry way into the building.

Finishing its four-year facilities plan, the major projects will be roofing work at the high school, middle school and Saffell.

Paving work is needed throughout the district.

And a new bus garage is needed.

Of course, Mitchell said those projects are top priorities and will be completed as construction funding is available.

Further down the road, the district facility plan calls for a new high school. But with a building of that size, Mitchell said the bonding capacity for a \$75 million project could be several years down the road.


The plan, which is subject to approval of the school board, would be to build a new high school and then repurpose the existing ACHS for other uses, such as increasing the offerings of the tech center and career pathway opportunities.

Key back to school information for new year


ANDERSON COUNTY SCHOOLS 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR Opening Day for Students: August 7th Office Hours: 7:30am to 4:30pm Instructional Hours: 8am to 3pm	EZRA SPARROW EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER – Principal Robin Ratliff – Phone: 502-839-2504 EMMA B. WARD ELEMENTARY – Principal Jeanna Slusher – Phone: 502-839-4236
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