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North Texas parents are worried about the measles outbreak. Here's what doctors say

Measles hasn't been found in D-FW, but pediatricians are advising patients to get vaccinated if they can.

By [Emily Brindley](#) and [Sasha Richie](#)
Staff Writers

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A sign is seen outside a clinic with the South Plains Public Health District Sunday, Feb. 23, 2025, in Brownfield, Texas. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez) (Julio Cortez / AP)

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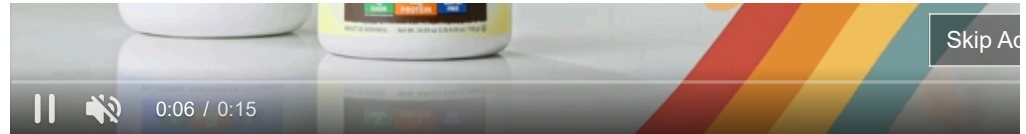




As the measles outbreak in West Texas continues to grow, North Texas doctors say they’re fielding a growing number of questions from concerned parents.

Related: What parents need to know about protecting their kids from measles





Dr. [Christopher Dreiling](#), a pediatrician at Pediatric Associates of Dallas, said his office has had “dozens and dozens” of measles inquiries.

“We’ve had a deluge ... of calls and visits and concern about this,” Dreiling said.



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Texas' outbreak began in Gaines County, which sits on the border with New Mexico. The Texas Department of State Health Services has reported 146 confirmed cases as of Friday morning, all in West Texas and the Panhandle. That’s more cases than the state has reported in any full year since 1992.

There have not been any reports of measles cases in Dallas or Fort Worth.

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Local health officials in Rockwall County — just east of Dallas — did [report a measles case earlier this week](#), but they said the case does not appear to be connected to the West Texas outbreak. That case was not included in the cases the state reported Friday.

Related: Texas has an ongoing measles outbreak. Here's everything you need to know about the virus

Dreiling said the Rockwall case has “confused people,” because of the separate outbreak in West Texas.

While there's no evidence the outbreak has spread to North Texas, doctors said they're preaching the same thing to every concerned parent: Make sure you and your children are vaccinated.

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“The most robust way that we have to prevent measles is by the vaccination,” said Dr. [Carla Garcia Carreno](#), the medical director for Infection Prevention and Control at Children's Medical Center Plano. “It's a very effective vaccine and it's a very safe vaccine.”

What parents are saying

Hope Howard, a Dallas resident, said it's comforting to her as a parent that the outbreak is reserved to rural areas, but she's still concerned. Her daughter, Monroe, is nearly 18 months old and has received her first dose of the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine, but not the second.

“Measles isn't supposed to be a concern, right?” Howard said. “I feel like I shouldn't feel like I have to worry about it right now, but I do.”

Related: Can you get the measles vaccine while pregnant?

Because measles has been declared eliminated in the U.S., Howard said she feels uncertain about what would happen in the worst-case scenario if her child contracted the virus. That uncertainty is wrapped in all the other uncertainties of being a new mom.

All she can do now, Howard said, is make sure Monroe and her social circle at daycare and beyond are vaccinated, as well as maintain a positive relationship with her pediatrician.

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“It is just something that feels like a public duty, to just protect everyone’s children. So we’ve done our part and gotten her vaccinated,” Howard said.

Shelby Humber in Arlington had similar anxieties. When she heard of the outbreak, the first thing she did was call her doctor. However, she was told her 11-month-old, Wren, was too young to receive the vaccine. Instead, they needed to wait for Wren’s 12-month appointment.

After Humber heard about the first measles death and the case reported in Rockwall County, she decided she wasn’t taking no for an answer and worked with Wren’s pediatrician to get the vaccine.

“I don’t have an issue being pushy when it comes to my child,” Humber said.

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Related: As the West Texas outbreak continues, do you need a measles booster?

“When you become a parent, your entire job is keeping the child safe. And if something’s being handed to you, that is a 99.99% guarantee that this will keep your child safe, why would you not take that?”

As they wait for Wren’s first dose to kick in, Humber and her husband are taking precautions. They have pulled Wren out of a Little Gym class and are keeping her away from other children until they know she’s protected.

These decisions come with other baggage. Wren needs to begin socializing, Humber said, and the prospect of further isolation reminds Humber of [the issues children faced under COVID lockdowns](#).

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“I don’t think that it’s going to get to that scale with this. I hope not,” she said. “But I think it’s unfortunate all around.”

Can newborns get vaccinated?

The two-dose MMR vaccine is 97% effective at preventing the illness, which means vaccinated people are unlikely to catch the virus. [Health experts recommend](#) the first dose be administered to babies between 12 and 15 months old, with the second dose administered when the child is 4 to 6 years old.

In cases where young babies will be traveling internationally, or are living in an area with an outbreak, a single dose of the measles vaccine can be administered to those as young as six months old. In Gaines County, for instance, the epicenter of Texas’ outbreak, Carreno said doctors may be able to give single doses to six-month-old children.

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Because the outbreak has not spread to North Texas, pediatricians in North Texas said they are not recommending those early shots at this point.

“Here in North Texas, we don’t still have that outbreak situation, but certainly it’s one of the tools that we can implement if the situation happens here,” Carreno said.

Dreiling said his practice has been offering parents the option to give an early shot to six- to 12-month-old babies. None of the patients he’s seen have decided to do that, he said, after they understand it’s not recommended and it’s not a replacement for the first dose at one year.

“We’re not recommending it, the early dose, because right now there’s not demonstrated risk of local spread of measles,” Dreiling said.

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Dr. [Alice Phillips](#), a primary care physician at Cook Children’s Medical Center in Fort Worth, said families can protect their babies by making sure everyone else is up to date on their immunizations.

“It’s very similar to advice we give them for other vaccine-preventable diseases. We want to cocoon that baby in protection,” Phillips said. “That’s what’s so critical for families and for the community to understand about vaccines: What we all do protects those infants who can’t get vaccinated yet.”

For young, unvaccinated children who have caretakers outside of the home — such as at daycare — Phillips recommended parents ask about the providers' vaccination policy.

“I think they have a right to ask, ‘What is your policy for vaccination?’” Phillips said. “Asking questions is always appropriate.”

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For children in school, parents can check their school's or [district's vaccination level](#) to get a sense of how many other students are vaccinated.

Carreno added that pregnant people who are protected against measles — either through vaccination or a prior infection — may pass antibodies to their babies, which helps protect newborns against the illness. Research suggests this protection [may wane within the first few months of life](#).

If you're vaccinated, 'keep living life'

Dr. Daryl Curry, a [pediatrician in Dallas](#), said very few of his patients are unvaccinated. For parents who have decided not to vaccinate their children, he said, it's difficult to overcome concerns about the vaccines, even during an outbreak and even though the vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective.

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He hasn't had a parent change their mind about vaccination due to the measles outbreak, but it could still happen, he said.

For now, his practice is focusing on making sure patients are up to date on their immunizations.

"I haven't had anybody say, 'No, I don't want to do that,'" Curry said.

While the measles outbreak is frightening and poses risks to unvaccinated people, Phillips of Cook Children's emphasized parents should not avoid health facilities, including for routine and other medical care. Vaccinated people can go about their lives as normal, she said.

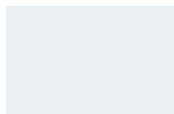
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"We keep living life. If you are protected and immunized, you can go about your life without concern," Phillips said. "You don't have to worry because you are protected."

Some local health agencies are offering the measles vaccination to residents, particularly in areas where the outbreak is ongoing. Regardless of where they live, people can contact their doctor or pharmacy to ask about vaccination.

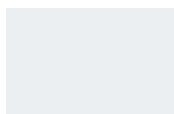
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Texas health official warns against 'measles parties' amid pleas for more vaccinations

Dr. Ron Cook, chief health officer for the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, urged families to avoid such gatherings and instead get vaccinated.



Map: These Texas schools have low measles vaccination rates

Childhood vaccination rates for measles are lowest in private schools in Texas, state data shows.



By **Emily Brindley**

Emily Brindley reports on health in North Texas and across the state. She was previously an investigative reporter at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Before moving to Texas in 2021, she covered the coronavirus pandemic at the Hartford Courant in Connecticut.

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By **Sasha Richie**

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