

The Pennsylvania Measles Outbreak

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Pennsylvania Department of Health Confirms Two Measles-Associated Deaths

The deaths mark the first losses related to the highly contagious virus in Pennsylvania in 35 years.

Getting vaccinated is the best protection against measles, providing 97% lifetime protection after two doses.

August 25, 2026

DOH confirmed both individuals were unvaccinated residents of Lancaster County. To protect the privacy of the individuals and their families, DOH will not release any additional details that could personally identify these individuals and their families. Protecting Pennsylvanians' privacy is a core responsibility of DOH. DOH has confirmed [393 cases in 28 counties](#) thus far in 2026.

Pennsylvania: October 6, 2026

- The Pennsylvania outbreak centered on Lancaster, Mifflin, and Jefferson Counties, homes to large Mennonite and Amish populations.
- Currently, the PA DOH report 1,004 confirmed cases across 39 counties.
- 198 people had been hospitalized.
- 5 measles deaths.
- 0.4% of individuals infected during the outbreak were fully vaccinated against measles.

Measles deaths in PA

- 40-year-old with COPD from pneumonia.
- 18-year-old from ADEM.
- 20-year-old with leukemia from pneumonia.
- 4-month-old with brain abnormality from pneumonia.
- 1-day-old with congenital measles from ruptured spleen

Four more cases of congenital measles recently reported, two now in the NICU.

Only going to get worse

- Measles is a winter/spring virus.
- Children are now back in school, where they can more easily share their viruses.
- Pennsylvania has both religious and philosophical vaccine exemptions and most schools don't enforce vaccine entry requirements.
- CDC estimates that at least 280,000 kindergartners in the U.S. are unvaccinated against measles.

Measles

Measles rash

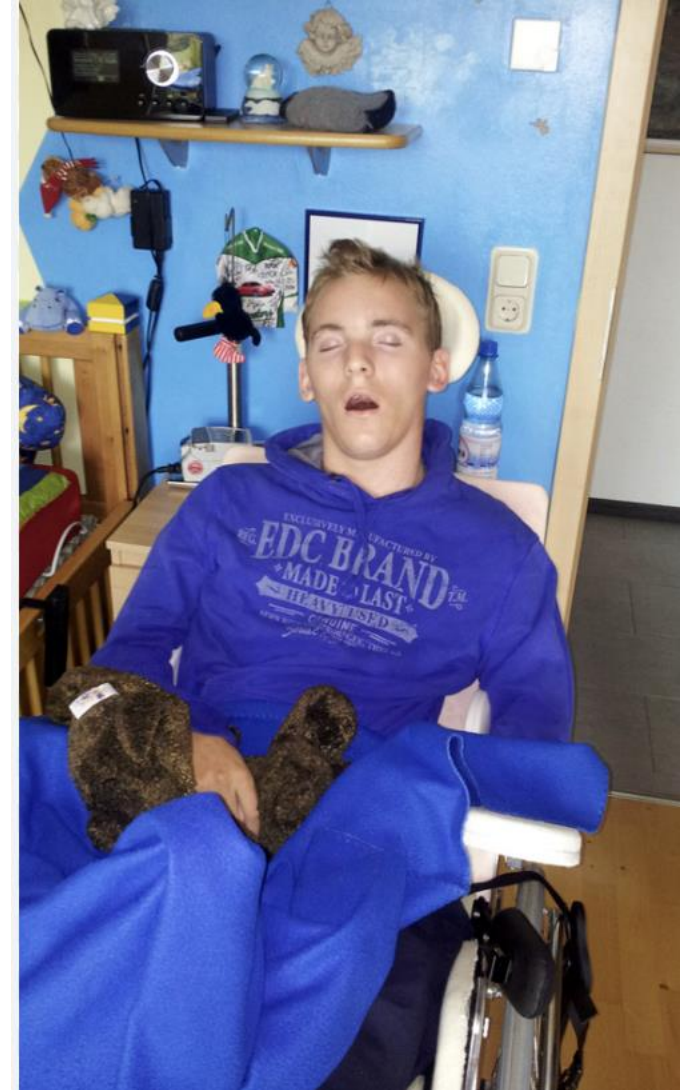


Before the measles vaccine

- Before the first measles became available in 1963, about 3-4 million people would be infected with measles, 48,000 would be hospitalized, and 500 would die.
- Hospitalizations were typically caused by severe pneumonia or dehydration or both. About 10% of children with measles are hospitalized.
- Measles virus also infects the brain, causing a primary encephalitis in 1-3 per 1,000 cases per year in the United States. About 25% of those with encephalitis suffered permanent brain damage.
- About 1 of every 1,000 children with measles died from the disease.

SSPE

SSPE



Immune Amnesia

Measles virus infection diminishes preexisting antibodies that offer protection from other pathogens

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- Measles destroys 11% to 73% of immune memory B and T cells, erasing past protections against other viral and bacterial infections.
- Immune suppression lasts for an average of 27 months but can last as long as 5 years.
- Immune suppression does not occur following MMR vaccine.
- Immune suppression increases risk for bacterial or viral pneumonias, otitis media, intestinal infections, and reactivation of latent TB.

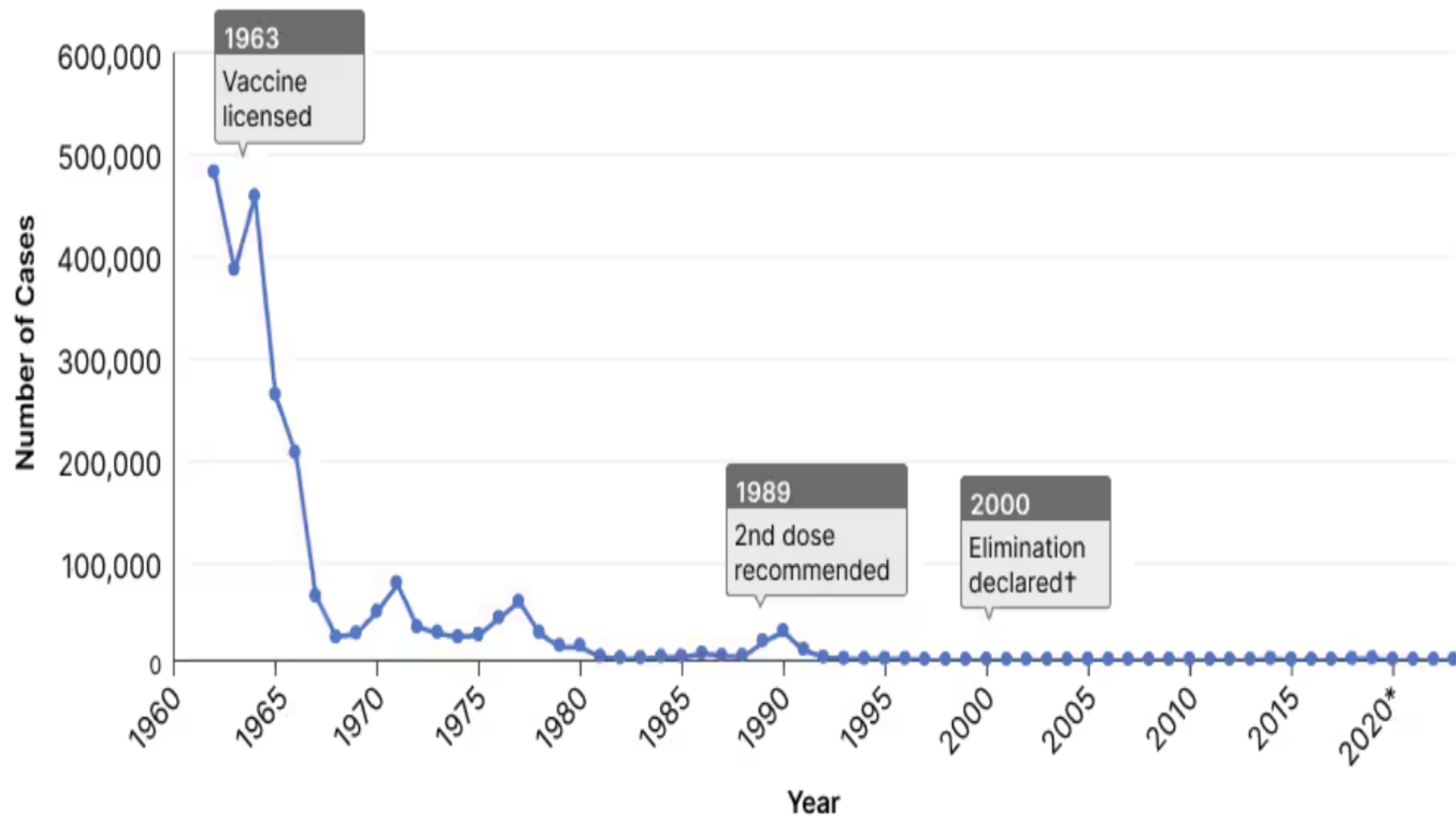
ADEM

ADEM

- Acute disseminated encephalomyelitis (ADEM) occurs in about 1 per 1,000 cases of measles.
- ADEM is a post-infectious autoimmune disease caused by an immune response directed against myelin, which sheaths the brain and spinal cord.
- Other viruses also cause ADEM, such as EBV, mumps, rubella, influenza A and B, VZV, CMV, coxsackie B, HSV, and adenovirus. Mortality rate is about 5%.
- One of four deaths in PA was caused by ADEM. Measles-induced ADEM has a mortality rate of 10-25%.

The Measles Vaccine

Reported Measles Cases in the United States from 1962 – 2023*



The measles vaccine in perspective

- Over the past 50 years, we have reduced child deaths by about 75 percent worldwide.
- 40 percent of that reduction in child deaths has been caused by vaccines.
- And 60 percent of that 40 percent reduction has been caused by the measles vaccine alone.