

Nassau child with measles released from hospital

By Lisa L. Colangelo and Steve

Langford lisa.colangelo@newsday.com, steve.langford@newsday.com Updated

March 26, 2024 10:58 am

SHARE

The Nassau County child who contracted measles was released from Cohen Children's Medical Center on Monday, officials said, as experts warned about low vaccination rates among children amid a rise in cases nationally.

"I'm pleased to say that the child's doing very well and will be discharged today," Dr. Lorry Rubin, chief of the hospital's division of pediatric infectious diseases said in an interview earlier in the day.

The child, who is under the age of 5 and was not vaccinated against the measles, was admitted to the hospital on Thursday. The child is just the third measles case in New York State this year. The other two cases were in New York City.

This is the fourth measles case in Nassau since 2014, according to the county health department.

Health officials have been contacting people who were in the Cohen Children's Medical Center Emergency Department waiting room and treatment area between 6:45 p.m. March 20 and 3:30 p.m. March 21 because there was a potential exposure to measles from the child.

"The disease is quite contagious," said Rubin. "That's one of the two biggest concerns — the severity of the disease and the potential complications, as well as how contagious it is."

For example, if you were in a room with 10 people who did not have appropriate vaccinations, nine of them would come down with measles after an appropriate incubation period, Rubin said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it can lead to severe complications such as pneumonia and

encephalitis. The CDC said about 1 in 5 unvaccinated people in the United States who get [measles is hospitalized](#) and about 1 in 20 children with measles gets pneumonia.



Dr. Lorry Rubin, chief of pediatric infectious diseases at Cohen Children's Medical Center, said the child is "doing very well." Credit: Anthony Florio

People with measles are contagious before they know they are sick — from four days before a rash appears to four days after, said Dr. David Fagan, vice chairman of pediatric ambulatory administration at Cohen's.

"So, at this point, the patient is not contagious," he said.

It is not yet clear how the child contracted measles. Officials said there was no indication the patient had traveled overseas, where measles is more common than in the United States. They also did not identify where in Nassau the child lives.

Measles, which is common in other parts of the world, was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000. Cases can be brought here by travelers who are not vaccinated, putting those who are too young to be vaccinated or have other special health conditions at risk of serious illness. It can also spread rapidly among those who are unvaccinated. The CDC said this year as of

March 21, 64 measles cases were reported in 17 jurisdictions including New York City, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The number of measles cases in the United States so far this year has already eclipsed all of 2023 when there were 58 cases nationally for the entire year.

"It's clearly the best indicator that people are not getting their kids vaccinated," said Arthur Caplan, a professor of bioethics at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine, and an expert on vaccine policy. "We are playing with fire given the high rate of transmission."

Guidance from the CDC states children should get their first dose of MMR at 12 to 15 months of age and the second dose between 4 and 6 years of age.

But some health care providers say parents are delaying or outright avoiding having their children vaccinated because of safety concerns or fears of a connection between autism and vaccines, even though that theory was debunked years ago.

According to the New York State Department of Health, 80.9% of children in Nassau and 82.1 % of children in Suffolk have received their first dose of the MMR vaccine by the age of 2. Rubin said the percentages "should be in the high 90s."

"Ever since the COVID vaccine, unfortunately, we've been seeing a bigger fear of every vaccine," said Dr. Scott Svitek, a pediatrician at Allied Physician Group's Commack Pediatric Associates. "The people who have had that inherent disagreement with medicine and science are now emboldened to say, 'I don't want vaccines for my children.' We're spending much more of our time explaining the importance of the vaccine, what we're trying to prevent and why this is important...I never want to face a parent and tell them the disease their child is dying of is something we could have prevented from a vaccine if you let us do our job