

SPRING 2026

Immunization & Provider Engagement Newsletter



Health Officer update: Andes virus (hantavirus) and Bundibugyo virus (Ebola)

You've likely heard about Andes virus, a type of hantavirus, which has been in the news lately. You've also likely heard about the Ebola (Bundibugyo virus) outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda.

We believe the risk to people in Pierce County from both is minimal. However, it's important to remember that prompt, coordinated public health action—in partnership with the people impacted—is what keeps the risk low. We need to have a coordinated public health system at all levels—local, state, and federal—and strong international partnerships to effectively respond to threats like these.

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Part of our role in situations like these is monitoring returning travelers and, if they need to seek medical care, coordinating with healthcare partners. At this time, we don't know of any Pierce County residents exposed to Andes virus. In coordination with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Washington State Department of Health (DOH), we evaluate and monitor Pierce County residents returning from DRC and Uganda.

Check out our recent:

- ➡ [Blog post about hantavirus.](#)
- ➡ [Health advisory about the Ebola outbreak.](#)

Reach out to us at (253) 649-1412 with any questions. 📞

Measles continues to spread in Washington.

Be prepared.

A rise in travel-related measles cases and local transmission is increasing the risk for measles across Washington. Providers should:



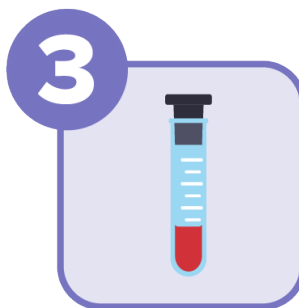
Identify

Be prepared to recognize and manage measles cases.



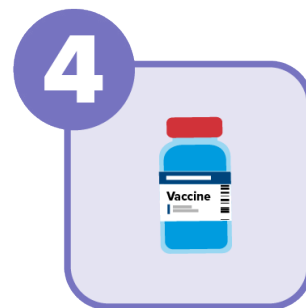
Notify

Immediately report all suspected measles cases to the Health Department at (253) 649-1412.



Test and manage

Understand how to test for measles and manage cases in your facility.



Assess and vaccinate

Ensure all pediatric and adult patients without evidence of immunity are [up to date on measles vaccine](#).

Read [DOH's provider alert](#) for detailed guidance and recommendations.

Our [Adult Measles, Mumps, Rubella \(MMR\) Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) details who needs vaccine, how many doses you need, and when you have full immunity.

To learn more about vaccines or find vaccine opportunities, visit our [kids' vaccine](#) and [adults' vaccine](#) pages. Have more vaccine questions? You can [find many answers online](#).

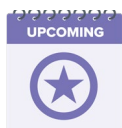
DOH developed [Preventing Measles \(Rubeola\) in Healthcare Settings](#) to support healthcare facilities in managing measles exposure. It is a tool for infection prevention, clinical, and operational teams and includes:

- Early screening and triage approaches to identify suspected measles cases.
- Immediate isolation and airborne precautions to reduce transmission risk.
- Guidelines for patient transport and movement within facilities.
- Environmental cleaning advice.
- Exposure definition and management.
- Resources to develop a measles response plan.

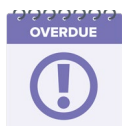
DOH and Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) updated their [airborne](#) and [airborne contact](#) precaution signs for acute care. 🔄

Opportunities to improve childhood vaccine coverage in Pierce County

As this school year wraps up, it's a great time to prepare for a smooth start to the next. Consider sending reminder/recall notifications to patients overdue for vaccines or well-child visits.



A **reminder** notifies families of an upcoming vaccine or visit.



A **recall** notifies families of an overdue vaccine or visit.

Many electronic health records (EHRs) can send these notifications. Washington State Immunization Information System (WAIS) can send them, too. Check out DOH's [instructions](#) and [video](#). For further training, email us at immunizations@tpchd.org. 

Protect their future
with HPV vaccine

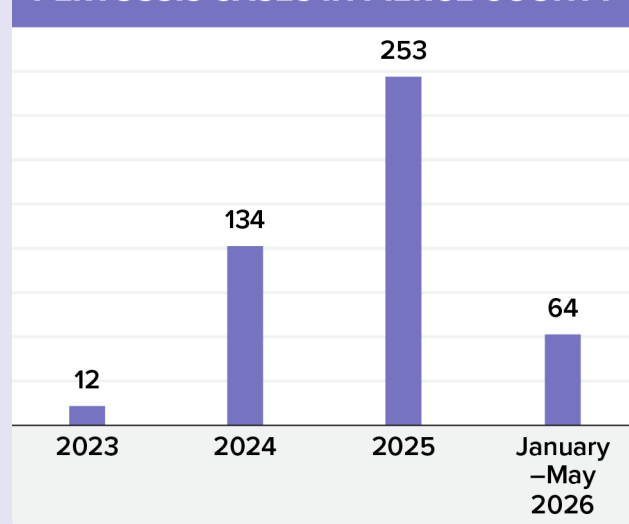
Learn more  tpchd.org/preventHPV



Pertussis activity in Pierce County

We're continuing to see cases of pertussis (also known as whooping cough). So far this year, we've investigated 64 cases.

PERTUSSIS CASES IN PIERCE COUNTY



Pertussis cases are typically cyclical, peaking every 3–5 years as the number of susceptible people increases as protection from vaccines and past infection fades over time.

Pertussis typically starts with upper respiratory infection-like symptoms, such as runny nose or mild cough. As the illness worsens, people may have severe coughing spells. These coughing fits make it hard to breathe and can cause vomiting, syncope, or other complications.

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for *Bordetella pertussis* is most sensitive when performed within 3–4 weeks of cough onset. Targeted antimicrobial postexposure prophylaxis (PEP) is recommended for all household contacts and other exposed contacts at increased risk for severe disease. Chemoprophylaxis is recommended within 21 days of exposure. Studies show that within households, secondary attack rates are high, even among contacts who are up to date on pertussis vaccine. 

Revisions to DOH blood lead testing recommendations



DOH revised the state's blood lead action level to 3.5 µg/dL, to be more protective of children's health and prevent further exposure. DOH recommends healthcare providers begin blood lead confirmatory and follow-up testing at 3.5 µg/dL.

Lead is a neurotoxin. Even at low levels, exposure is particularly harmful to children. Blood lead testing is the only way to definitively identify children who have been exposed to lead. Less than 10% of children younger than 6 years were tested for lead in 2024. That's likely a small fraction of the population for whom testing is required or recommended.

Medicaid requires healthcare providers to complete blood lead testing of Medicaid-enrolled children at 12 and 24 months, or at least once before 6 years old in the absence of a prior test. Additionally, all children with [risk factors for lead exposure](#) should receive testing.

Requested actions:

- ✓ Review [lead exposure risk factors and testing recommendations](#) with parents/caregivers of children younger than 6 years. All children who live in or regularly visit a house built before 1978 should receive testing.
- ✓ For children enrolled in Medicaid, conduct blood lead tests at 12 and 24 months of age. For children 24 months to 6 years old who are enrolled in Medicaid, provide testing at least once if there is no record of previous testing.
- ✓ If the child's initial test is a capillary over 3.5 µg/dL, schedule or complete confirmatory testing, preferably with a venous lead test.
- ✓ Depending on lead test results, schedule follow-up testing and assess lead risk factors at future well-child visits.
- ✓ Follow Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit's (PEHSU's) clinical guidance in [Recommendations on Management of Childhood Lead Exposure](#).
- ✓ For any blood lead test result, provide the family with guidance on potential sources of lead and steps to prevent further exposure.

The notifiable conditions rule—which requires all blood lead tests to be reported to DOH—will not change at this time. Reporting requirements will remain the same. Report within 2 business days for results ≥ 5 µg/dL, and within 30 days for all other results.

For more information on childhood lead exposure, check out [our kids and lead page](#) and DOH's [blood lead testing information for healthcare providers](#) and [blood lead notifiable condition](#) pages. 📄

Healthy Youth Survey results point to steady course in Washington youth well-being

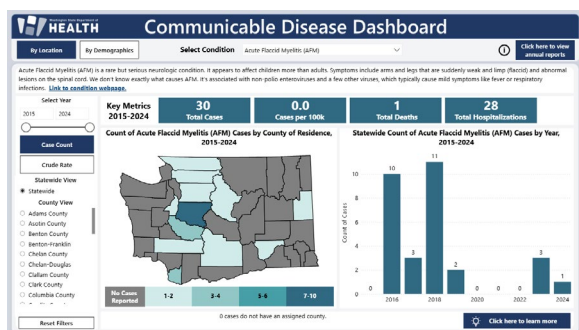
The statewide 2025 [Healthy Youth Survey](#) results are now available. The results offer a look at the health and well-being of Washington's young people.

The 2025 Healthy Youth Survey results suggest outcomes in mental health and substance use observed in recent years are holding steady. They also point to teens across Washington having adult support for their health, safety, and school engagement.

For more information, visit [Healthy Youth Survey](#). 

New DOH communicable disease dashboard

DOH launched a [new public-facing dashboard that shows communicable disease morbidity and mortality data for the state](#).



The dashboard accompanies DOH's [Annual Communicable Disease Report](#). It allows users to explore interactive annual data on reported cases, hospitalizations, and deaths for 88 [notifiable conditions](#). It provides trends, data on geographic patterns, and changes in communicable disease burden across Washington. Users can view trends and examine data by county of residence and age groups. 

Our data dashboards

We continue to expand [our data dashboards](#) to make it easier for healthcare providers, partner organizations, and members of the public to access data on the health and well-being of Pierce County residents.

Eleven dashboards are now available online. We plan to expand to about 70 dashboards in coming years. Reach out to us at (253) 649-1412 with questions or feedback. 

Other resources and health advisories

For information on diseases, guidelines, and when and how to report, check out the [Provider Resources](#) section of our website.

Our [health news and alerts page](#) has health advisories and other new information for providers.

[Subscribe to this newsletter](#) to receive updates via email. 



Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities