

Girl Scouts of South Carolina—Mountains to Midlands

Measles & Vaccine FAQ + Best Practices for Troop Meetings and Events

Updated using South Carolina Department of Public Health guidance (Feb 2026)

FAQ: Measles & Vaccination

What is measles?

Measles is a **highly contagious viral illness** spread through coughing, sneezing, or being in the same airspace as an infected person. The virus can remain in the air for up to two hours after the person leaves.

How contagious is it?

Very. Up to **9 out of 10 unvaccinated people** who are exposed will become infected.

What are the symptoms?

- High fever
- Cough, runny nose, red/watery eyes
- Rash that begins on the face and spreads downward (typically appears 2–4 days after symptoms start)

Who is most at risk?

- Children under 5
- Unvaccinated individuals
- Pregnant women
- People with weakened or compromised immune systems

What is happening in South Carolina right now?

As of February 2026, SC is experiencing a large, ongoing outbreak with hundreds of cases, primarily in Upstate regions.

What does South Carolina recommend?

The SC Department of Health recommends that everyone be up to date on MMR vaccination, which remains the most effective protection against contracting and spreading measles.

Can troop leaders deny membership or exclude girls from a troop because they are not vaccinated?

No. Troop leaders may not refuse membership or exclude a girl from participation solely based on vaccination status. Membership eligibility and participation standards are set by GSUSA and the council. We are committed to inclusive participation; decisions related to health precautions should be guided by state laws, public health guidance, and council policy, not individual troop rules.

What if someone in my troop is unvaccinated?

As a reminder, from the [Girl Scouts Safety Activity Checkpoints](#), pages 18-19:

Vaccination and Immunization: Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations. Therefore, it is best to obtain local and state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [CDC's website](#).

Following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) standards and guidance from local health authorities is expected, and volunteers should be prepared to monitor evolving health matters.

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate a Girl Scout member's non-immunization with other troop parents, contact Girl Scouts of South Carolina—Mountains to Midlands for guidance at customercare@gssc-mm.org or 1-800-849-GIRL.

What is Girls Scouts SC—MM doing to keep girls safe at camp this summer?

The safety and well-being of every girl is our top priority. This summer, we will be taking additional precautions to help prevent the spread of measles and other illnesses at camp. This includes collecting vaccination status and immunization records from campers and camp staff and following updated health and safety protocols.

How do I keep my girls safe?

Please see *Best Practices for Troop Meetings, Overnight and Events*.

Best Practices for Troop Meetings, Overnights & Events

Based on CDC and South Carolina Department of Public Health guidance (Feb 2026).

Measles is highly contagious and spreads through the air; the virus can linger in shared air up to two hours after an infected person leaves. MMR vaccination is the best protection; two doses protect about 97% of people. Our shared goal is to keep Girl Scout spaces welcoming and safe for everyone.

1) Vaccination & Immunity Awareness

- Encourage families to ensure their child is up to date on MMR.
- If unsure, families should verify with their healthcare provider whether their child received both doses (typically at 12–15 months and 4–6 years).
- Many cases in SC involve individuals with no documented vaccination, making record verification important.
- For immunocompromised troop members:
 - Opt for outdoor meetings, hybrid options, or larger indoor spaces.
 - Consider offering small group activities to lower exposure risk or reduce crowding by spacing tables or rotating activities.

2) Attendance & Illness

- Stay home and consult a healthcare provider if a girl or volunteer has:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Runny nose
 - Red/watery eyes
 - Rash
- Symptoms can appear 7–21 days after exposure, so ongoing monitoring is important.
- People with measles are contagious from 4 days before the rash begins, through 4 days after.

3) Safer meeting set-ups (especially during outbreaks or with troop members that are immunocompromised)

- Meet outdoors whenever possible; otherwise increase ventilation (open windows/doors, use larger rooms).

- Reduce crowding by spacing tables or rotating activities, especially supportive for immunocompromised members.
- Maintain hand soap, sanitizer, and tissues to help reduce other illnesses that can strain families during outbreaks.
- If needed, provide alternative participation options (virtual, outdoor-only, or shorter meeting options).

4) Other best practices

- Maintain an attendance roster for each meeting or event.
- Check exposure alerts: SC DPH posts public exposure locations and updates them twice weekly (Tue/Fri). Review before large events/overnights.
- As with all activities, review your [Girl Scouts Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and document an *Emergency Action Plan* as described on pages 9 and 10 (who you'll notify, how you'll dismiss, communication plan).

5) If Someone becomes sick at a meeting

- Separate the symptomatic person and arrange for immediate pick-up.
- Notify all families so they can monitor for symptoms during the 7–21-day window.
- Unvaccinated girls who have been exposed to measles should stay home and away from others for 21 days after the exposure date per CDC guidance.
- Inform council staff with appropriate documentation via our [Accident/Incident Report Form](#).
- Follow SC DPH instructions if exposure is suspected or confirmed.

NOTE: Special considerations for immunocompromised Girl Scouts

Families may privately share that their Girl Scout is immunocompromised. Leaders should:

- Offer outdoor meetings or improved ventilation indoors.
- Use small group activities to lower exposure risk or reduce crowding by spacing tables or rotating activities.
- Provide opportunities for the girl to participate in ways that feel safe (virtual options, masked participation, distanced seating, or modified attendance).
- Communicate kindly and proactively about upcoming events with potential exposure risks (e.g., Service Unit Events, large scale events, etc.)

Reminders about health forms

To help leaders plan safely, especially during illness outbreaks, families should:

- Ensure your [Girl Health History Form](#) is up to date.
- Inform leaders of any immunocompromising conditions, allergies, or medical vulnerabilities (confidential and only shared on a need-to-know basis)
- Update medication and emergency contact information prior to events, trips, or overnights.

Health forms are critical for responding effectively to illness concerns and ensuring inclusive planning for all girls.