

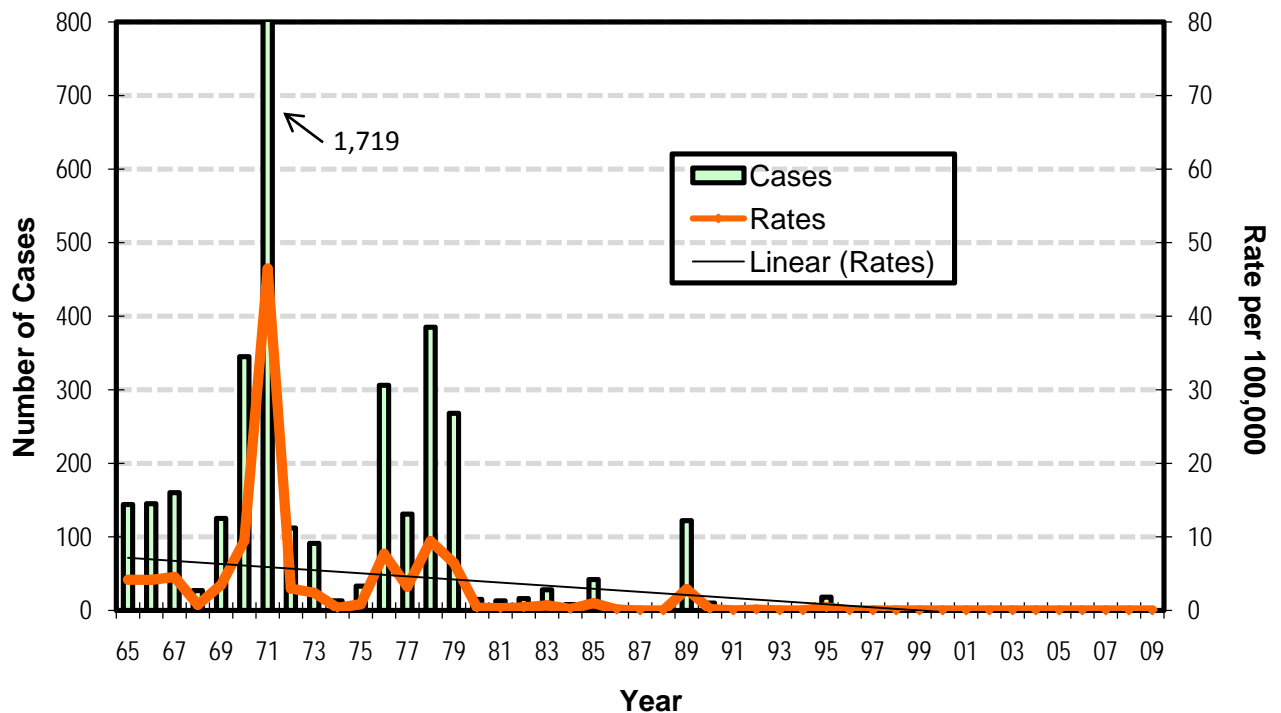
Measles

Measles is a Class A Disease and must be reported to the state within 24 hours by calling the phone number listed on the website.

Measles (Rubeola) is an acute, highly communicable illness caused by the Measles virus. In the pre-vaccine era, measles was an epidemic disease. Most cases occurred in preschool and young school-age children. Practically all children became infected by five years of age. Measles epidemics occurred every two to five years and lasted two to three months during the early spring. In addition to epidemics, a few cases occurred every week throughout the inter-epidemic period.

The first measles vaccine was introduced in 1965; an improved version replaced it in 1979. In 1967, immunization was applied on a massive scale. The year 1971 was the last year that the U.S. experienced a large upsurge of measles. By 1981, Louisiana saw fewer than twenty reported cases each year. In 1989, there was a national measles epidemic wave and the number of cases in Louisiana rose to 122. Since 1990, intensified immunizations have brought the reported cases down to fewer than ten cases per year, with the exception of a small outbreak of fifteen cases in 1995. (Figure 1) As a result of a successful U.S. vaccination program, measles elimination (i.e., interruption of endemic measles transmission) was declared in the United States in 2000.

Figure 1. Measles cases and incidence rates - Louisiana, 1965-2009



The last case of measles in Louisiana was reported in 2008, (the case was imported). Although eliminated in the U.S. and the WHO American Region, twenty million cases of measles occur each year worldwide. The 2008 measles case serves as a reminder that measles is still imported into the United States and can result in outbreaks unless population immunity remains high through vaccination.