

# MEASLES IN THE UNITED STATES

**NO VACCINE**  
approximately  
**500,000**  
cases reported  
per year<sup>4</sup>

**VACCINE INTRODUCED**  
Measles vaccine introduced<sup>4</sup>

- Of the 500,000 cases reported per year, measles caused
- 150,000 respiratory complications reported per year<sup>5</sup>
  - 4000 cases of severe brain damage reported per year<sup>5</sup>
  - 500 deaths reported per year<sup>4</sup>

## What Is Measles?

Measles is a highly contagious disease that is spread through the air through coughing and sneezing.<sup>1</sup> Measles starts with a fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes and sore throat and is followed by a rash that spreads all over the body.<sup>1</sup>

Measles can be serious, especially for children younger than 5 years of age.<sup>1</sup> It can lead to pneumonia, encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and even death.<sup>1</sup> For every 1000 children who get measles, one or two will die from the disease.<sup>2</sup>

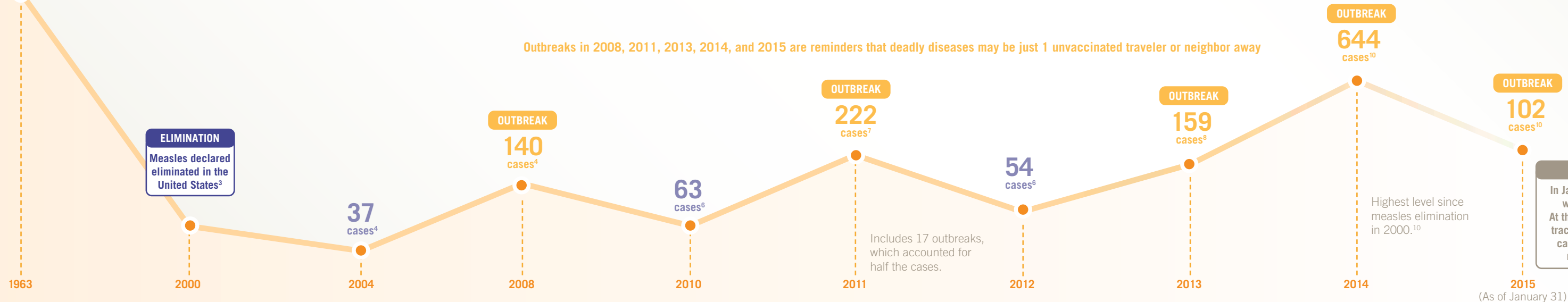
## How Is Measles Spread?

Although measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, the disease is just a plane ride away.<sup>3</sup> Unvaccinated travelers who get measles while they are in areas where measles is still common — including parts of Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific — can bring the disease into the United States.<sup>3</sup> They can then spread measles to other people who are not vaccinated against measles.<sup>3</sup>

## What Can We Do to Prevent Measles Outbreaks?

The United States has high childhood vaccination rates overall, but in recent years, communities of unvaccinated people have become increasingly common.<sup>3</sup> These pockets pose a risk to maintaining control over vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles. Once introduced, the disease can spread to unprotected members of the community and can lead to serious outbreaks.

Anyone who has not been vaccinated, such as people who refuse vaccination, are at risk for getting infected with measles and spreading it to others, including those who cannot get vaccinated because they are too young or have specific health conditions.<sup>3</sup> The best way to prevent a resurgence of measles is to raise awareness about the importance of vaccinations and increase immunization rates.



### References:

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<sup>a</sup> Most of these cases are part of a large, ongoing multi-state outbreak linked to an amusement park in California.