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# Measles

## *What You Need to Know*



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### What is measles?

Measles is a respiratory illness with rash caused by the rubeola virus.

### Who can get measles?

Anyone who has not been fully vaccinated (2 doses of MMR) for measles or who has not had a confirmed case of measles can get measles. If exposed, approximately 90% of people who have not been vaccinated or previously had measles will develop the disease.

### What are the symptoms of measles?

- High fever (may spike to over 104°F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Tiny white spots on the inner cheeks, gums, and roof of the mouth (Koplik Spots) 2-3 days after symptoms begin
- A rash that is red, raised, blotchy; usually starts on face, spreads to trunk, arms, and legs 3-5 days after symptoms begin

### How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

Symptoms usually begin 7-14 days after exposure, but can appear as long as 21 days after exposure. If symptoms develop, do not visit your doctor, urgent care or emergency room unless you call ahead so they can take precautions to prevent exposure to other individuals.

### How is measles spread?

Measles is easily spread by person-to-person direct contact and airborne spread of droplets from the nose, throat, and mouth through sneezing, coughing, and speaking. It is spread through even minimal air exposure.

### How long is a person contagious?

Measles can be spread 4 days before developing the rash through 4 days after the rash appears. Measles is highly contagious. A person can be infected with measles just by being in a room with an infected person, even up to 2 hours after the infected person has left.

### I have been exposed to someone with measles, what do I do?

- **Unvaccinated individuals need to get vaccinated within 72 hours of exposure.** If you do not have a record of two measles (MMR) vaccines, unsure if you have been vaccinated, or unsure if you have had measles in the past, contact your healthcare provider.

- **Immune Globulin (Ig) treatment is effective within 6 days of exposure for high-risk individuals** including those who are unvaccinated or unsure about vaccination status, pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system due to illness and diseases like HIV, malnutrition, and/or medications.
- **If symptoms develop, do not visit your doctor or emergency room unless you call ahead** so they can take precautions to prevent exposure to other individuals.
- **Stay home if you are sick and don't allow visitors in your home as measles is highly contagious.**
- **Watch for symptoms for 21 days after potential exposure.** Call your preferred healthcare provider if symptoms develop and you believe you were exposed.

## Are there complications from measles?

Measles can make individuals very ill. Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) is a serious complication of measles. A more common complication of measles is an ear infection or pneumonia. During pregnancy, measles may cause preterm birth or the baby being born at a low birthweight. Death due to measles is rare in the U.S.

## Is there a treatment for measles?

If exposed to someone with measles, unvaccinated individuals or those without evidence of immunity can be vaccinated within 72 hours of exposure to help prevent disease. Immune Globulin (Ig) treatment is effective within 6 days of exposure for high-risk individuals.

Bed rest at home for at least 4 days after the appearance of the rash is necessary to not infect others. Supportive care can be given to relieve symptoms and address complications

## How can measles be prevented?

- Measles is preventable by vaccination.
- Measles vaccine is a 2-dose series.
- All healthy children should be vaccinated at 12 - 15 months with the combination shot for measles, mumps, rubella (MMR).
- A 2nd MMR vaccine is usually given at 4 - 6 years of age. It can be given at any time as long as it is at least 4 weeks after the 1st dose.
- Some infants less than 12 months old should get a dose of MMR if they are traveling out of the country (this dose will not count toward their routine series), were exposed to someone with measles or are in an area with ongoing transmission. Discuss with your healthcare provider to see if this is an option for your child.
- Adults born in 1957 or later should receive at least 1 dose of MMR vaccine unless they have other acceptable evidence of immunity. A second dose of MMR vaccine is needed for adults who may have been exposed to a measles case, or those who are students in colleges/universities, work in health care, or plan to travel internationally. Check with your health care provider to see if you need to be vaccinated.
- Pregnant women should not get vaccinated as this is a live viral vaccine.



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- All women of childbearing age should avoid contact with those who have measles.
- Be sure to keep a record of all immunizations. Write down when the shots were received.

## What if measles occurs at school or a day care center?

All cases must be reported to your local health department within 24 hours. People born after 1956 who cannot prove that they either have had: *Laboratory evidence of immunity to measles, or Measles vaccine after 12 months of age and a 2nd dose at least 4 weeks later*, should get a measles vaccine. Otherwise, they will be excluded from school/day care for at least 21 days after the beginning of the last measles case.



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