

Measles (Red Measles, Rubeola)

What is Measles?

- Measles is an infection caused by a virus.
- Measles tends to be more severe in adults and very young children. It can affect all ages.

How is measles spread?

- Measles is highly contagious.
- It is spread easily between people through the air.
- It passes from an infected person to others through coughing, sneezing and even talking.
- The virus remains in the air for up to 2 hours after a person with measles has left the room.
- **People can spread the virus to others from 1 or 2 days before they have any symptoms until 4 days after the rash appears.**
- Following measles immunization, a rash can occur in 4-12 days. This rash is not contagious.

What signs and symptoms can you have?

- Children with measles usually have a high fever, cough, runny nose, and red eyes. After a few days a rash appears.
- The rash starts on the face as a few red spots. The rash worsens quickly and spreads to cover the body. The rash may last up to 7 days.
- Rarely, people who have been immunized against measles can still get it but should have milder symptoms.

What are the complications of measles?

- Measles can be very serious. It can cause ear infections, pneumonia, brain infections or death.
- Due to immunization, cases of measles are now rare, but cases and outbreaks still occur.
- It is more serious in very young children and adults.
- It is important for anyone who thinks they may have measles to have tests done to confirm the diagnosis. **Individuals should call ahead to let their health care provider know they are coming and that they suspect measles.**

How is measles diagnosed?

- Measles is diagnosed through a blood test and can be confirmed through a urine specimen or a throat swab.

How do you treat measles?

- There is no specific treatment.
- Supportive measures to relieve symptoms - fever can be treated with acetaminophen (e.g. Tempra™, Tylenol™).

Acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin®) should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye's syndrome.

How can you prevent the spread of measles?

- The single most important way to prevent measles is to be immunized with the measles vaccine.
- Immunization for measles is offered routinely in 2 doses. They are usually given at 12 months and 18 months of age.
- If you think you have been exposed to measles, see a doctor. **Call ahead so they can prepare to see you without exposing others.**
- If measles occurs in a school or daycare, children who are not immunized must be kept at home until they are immunized or until 21 days after the last case of measles.
- Infants and other unimmunized people that have been exposed to measles may be able to receive some protection through immunization. Healthcare providers should discuss this with the Medical Health Officer.
- Someone with measles must not go to school, daycare or out in public until at least 4 days after the rash begins.

Quick Facts

- Measles is highly contagious.
- Measles can be very serious.
- Immunization has made measles a rare disease.
- Anyone who thinks they may have measles should speak to their health care provider or call HealthLine at 811. Please call ahead to let them know measles is suspected.

For more information contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner OR HealthLine at 811.

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