

Measles

Rubeola



What is measles?

Measles is a serious and very contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus.

Who gets measles?

Anyone born January 1, 1957, or later who has not had measles or has not been vaccinated is susceptible to measles.

How is measles spread?

It is spread when an infected person breathes, sneezes, coughs, or talks. You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been for up to two hours after that person left the room.

What are the symptoms of the disease?

A typical case of measles begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik's spots) may appear inside the mouth. Three to five days after the start of symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears. The rash usually begins on a person's face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104 degrees F. After a few days, the fever subsides and the rash fades.

How soon after an infection do the symptoms appear?

Symptoms may appear 7-21 days after exposure.

When and for how long is a person able to spread measles?

People can spread measles from 4 days before until 4 days after the rash begins.

Does infection with measles make a person immune?

Yes. After illness, a person probably has lifelong immunity to measles.

Is there a treatment for measles?

No, there is no specific treatment beyond bed rest, fluids, and control of fever. There may be additional treatment if complications develop.

What are the complications associated with measles?

Many people with measles have complications like diarrhea, ear infections, pneumonia, or acute encephalitis (an

inflammation of the brain that can lead to convulsions, and can leave a child deaf or developmentally delayed). Complications are more common in children under 5 years of age and adults older than 20.

One of every 20 children with measles gets pneumonia. For every 1,000 children who get measles, one child will develop encephalitis, and one or two will die from measles complications.

Measles during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage or premature births.

Are there vaccines for measles?

Yes. Measles is usually combined with mumps and rubella in the MMR vaccine.

- Children should receive two doses of MMR vaccine: the first at 12 to 15 months of age and the second at 4 to 6 years of age.
- Adults born before January 1, 1957 are assumed to be immune to measles. Other adults (except for pregnant women) who have not had measles or been vaccinated are at risk and should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Pregnant women should not be vaccinated until after delivery.
- Certain adults (such as healthcare workers, international travelers, or adults attending post high school educational institutions) should receive two doses of MMR vaccine.

What can be done to prevent the spread of measles?

- Protect your children by having them vaccinated.
- Protect yourself by making sure you have immunity to measles.
- If you think you might have been exposed to measles and need to seek healthcare, call ahead so appropriate measures can be taken to protect other patients and staff.

For more information:

Spokane Regional Health District
Disease Prevention and Response
(509) 324.1442 | TDD (509) 324.1464