



Fact Sheet: Measles

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

What is measles?

Measles is a contagious and serious respiratory disease caused by the measles virus. It is very contagious and, in rare cases, can be deadly.

How is it spread?

Measles spreads when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes. This illness is more common in late winter and early spring.

People can transmit the virus 4 days before the rash starts to 4 days after the rash appears.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles starts with a fever that can get very high. Some of the other symptoms that may occur are:

- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red eyes
- Ear infection
- Pneumonia
- Diarrhea
- Rash of tiny red spots that start on the face & spread to the rest of the body

How is measles treated?

There is no specific medicine to cure measles. If a person develops symptoms, they should consult their health care provider for the diagnostic testing to confirm diagnosis of the measles virus.

People should:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration (i.e. water, juice, or tea).

- Take non-aspirin medication (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) for fevers and body aches.
- The sick person should stay at home until 4 days after the appearance of the rash.

How is measles prevented?

The best way to prevent measles is to be vaccinated against it. The vaccine is given in combination with the mumps and rubella vaccines, known as MMR vaccine. Two (2) MMR injections are needed to be completely immunized.

Teenagers and adults who do not know if they are protected against measles should ask their doctor or clinic about the MMR vaccine.

Pregnant women should not receive the live vaccine—and all women of childbearing age should avoid anyone with measles.

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