

Measles Fact Sheet

Measles is a serious and highly contagious disease caused by a virus

Measles usually occurs in preschool age children who haven't had their measles vaccine, or in school age children and young adults who have had only one shot of measles vaccine. Almost everyone born before 1957 has already had measles.

Measles virus is spread easily:

- Through the air when someone with measles coughs or sneezes
- By direct contact with infected nose or throat secretions

Symptoms to look for include:

- Rash that starts on the face and neck, and then spreads
- High fever
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Cough

Measles symptoms start about 10 days after exposure

It takes about 10 days (range 7 to 18 days) from exposure to measles to onset of fever, and usually 14 days from exposure to onset of rash.

Although most people recover completely, measles can cause complications

Severe cases of measles may develop ear problems, diarrhea, pneumonia, brain infection, and even death. Infants and adults are usually more sick than children and teenagers.

Measles can be prevented with measles vaccine

Measles vaccine is recommended for children at 12 to 15 months of age. The vaccine is given as part of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. A second dose of measles vaccine, usually given as MMR vaccine, is now required for all children at entry to kindergarten (4 to 6 years old). The second dose of vaccine may be given at any age, if it was not received at 4 to 6 years of age. Anyone born in 1957 or later should get measles vaccine (or find out if they are immune) if they work in a setting where they may get exposed, such as health care settings. Women should not get the vaccine if they are already pregnant or plan to get pregnant within 3 months after getting vaccinated.

A pregnant woman should check with her doctor if she has been exposed

A pregnant woman should check with her doctor if she has been in contact with a person who has measles or if she has symptoms of measles. Pregnant women do not necessarily need to be excluded from settings where measles cases are occurring since the risk to the pregnant woman will depend on whether the woman is already immune. Each exposure needs to be individually evaluated.

Call your local health department or your doctor if you think you have measles or have been exposed to someone with measles

If you or anyone in your house has signs of measles, or if you have been in contact with someone who has measles, call your local health department or your doctor. The measles vaccine may prevent illness if you receive it within 3 days of contact with the measles virus, and another medication (Immune Globulin) may prevent illness if you receive it within 6 days of contact with the measles virus. Always call your doctor first before visiting the office so steps can be taken to prevent the spread of measles to other people in the office.