

Measles

Fact Sheet



What is measles?

Measles (Rubeola) is a highly contagious illness characterized by fever and rash.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear 7 to 14 days after exposure, but can take up to 21 days.

- **High fever**
- **Runny nose**
- **Red, watery eyes**
- **Cough**
- **Koplik spots** (tiny white spots) in the mouth
- **A rash appears 3-5 days after symptoms start.** This begins on the head & face, then spreads downward. The rash is made up of small, flat red bumps that may join as the rash progresses.

Prevention

Know your immunity—through vaccine records, previous illness, or a blood test. **Measles can be prevented with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine.** Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles and one dose is about 93% effective. **Talk to your doctor about vaccination.**

How is it spread?

Measles spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets when someone with measles coughs, sneezes, or talks. The virus can live in the air for up to two hours after a person with measles has gone. **A person with measles can spread the virus to others from 4 days before to 4 days after the rash appears.**

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for measles. **Use non-aspirin medications to treat fever in children.** Mild complications include diarrhea and ear infection. Severe complications include pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). **If you are exposed to measles:** call your doctor as soon as possible to discuss your immune status. Eligible persons may receive post exposure vaccination or treatment to prevent measles infection.

