

Measles

Measles, also known as rubeola, is a disease caused by a virus. Measles spreads easily from person to person when someone coughs or sneezes. The disease usually develops about 14 days after a person is exposed to it. Someone with measles can spread it up to 4 days before the rash appears, and for 4 days afterward.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever
- Watery, red eyes or “pinkeye”
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Small red spots, with blue-white centers in the mouth
- Red or reddish-brown skin rash that often begins around the head and moves down the body

Treatment of Measles

It is important to have your child vaccinated because there is no medical treatment for measles. A sick child should have plenty of fluids and rest. Symptoms usually go away in about two weeks without medical treatment. However, this disease can lead to serious trouble. The risks of severe problems and death are higher in children under 5 years and adults over 20 years.

Preventing Measles

The best protection against measles is the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. Children should have the first dose right after their first birthday (12 to 15 months old) and a second dose before they enter kindergarten (4 to 6 years old). Not all children should have this vaccine so be sure to talk to your doctor first.

Measles is not common in the United States, but those who travel outside the country are at a higher risk of exposure to the disease. Although not required, travelers are strongly urged to get vaccinated.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child has an earache.
- Your child is older than 6 months and has a fever over 102 degrees Fahrenheit or is younger than 6 months with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
- An infant is exposed to measles.
- Your child is exposed to measles while taking medicines that weaken the immune system.
- Your child is exposed to measles and he has cancer, tuberculosis or another disease that weakens the immune system.

When Your Child May Return to School or Daycare

Notify the school or daycare if your child has measles. Cases of measles should be reported to the Health Department.

Measles is easily passed to others, so children should not attend school or childcare for at least five days after the start of the rash.