



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Measles

Measles (rubeola) is an infection caused by a germ (virus). It makes you feel sick for a short time and might cause serious health problems later.

How It Spreads

Measles spreads from person to person very easily (very contagious). This happens when someone who has it coughs or sneezes the virus into the air or onto a surface. The virus goes into their eyes, nose, or mouth when breathed in or touched. The virus can stay alive in the air and on hard surfaces for a few hours. Symptoms usually develop in 8 to 12 days after a person is exposed to the virus.

- Often, the infected person does not know that they have measles until they feel sick.
- Measles can be spread to others 4 days before to 4 days after the rash appears.

Those at Higher Risk

Measles can be very serious for some people. Common problems include ear infections and loose poop (diarrhea). It can lead to more serious problems, like pneumonia or swelling of the brain (encephalitis).

Those at highest risk for more serious illness are:

- Young children (younger than 5 years of age)
- Adults over age 20
- Pregnant people
- People with a weakened immune system (immunocompromised)

Signs and Symptoms

- Early symptoms (days 1 to 4):
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Runny nose
 - Watery and red eyes
 - Small red spots with whitish-blue centers inside the cheeks
- Later symptoms (day 4 or more):
 - Rash appears
 - Peak fever (104° Fahrenheit (F), 40° Celsius (C) or higher)
- Measles rash
 - Starts on the face, behind the ears, and along the hairline. It will spread down the body to the feet within 3 days.
 - First the rash will look flat, then raised spots appear. As it spreads, the spots will form into clusters. The clusters will flow into each other to form large, red blotches.
 - The rash lasts 3 to 5 days. It slowly fades to a brownish color, starting first from the face and working down the body. The skin may peel.

Prevention

The best way to prevent getting measles is to be fully vaccinated with the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine.

- Two shots (doses) are needed to be fully vaccinated.
 - 1st dose right after their first birthday (12 to 15 months old).
 - 2nd dose before entering kindergarten (4 to 6 years old).
- Anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk of getting it. Nearly all cases of measles in the United States happen in those who are not fully vaccinated.
- If you're traveling out of the country, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends earlier dosing of the MMR vaccine to infants as young as 6 months of age. Talk to your child's doctor or health care provider before traveling.
- Vitamin A does not prevent measles infection.

Treatment

- Since measles is a virus, antibiotics will not work.
- Give your child plenty of fluids and rest.
- **Never give your child products with aspirin in them unless told by a doctor.**

- Give fever-reducing medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®), as needed. Before taking ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®), check with your doctor or health care provider to make sure it is okay. Follow all package dosing instructions.
- Symptoms usually go away in about 2 weeks without treatment. Do NOT ignore symptoms that get worse. Tell your child's doctor or healthcare provider if they are not getting better.
- If your child has a severe case of measles, they may need to be admitted to the hospital for treatment. If they also have a bacterial infection, such as pneumonia or an ear infection, they will get antibiotics.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor or health care provider if you think they have measles. Do this **before** bringing them in or going to the hospital. You don't want to spread it to others.

It is very important to call your child's healthcare provider if they have been exposed to measles and:

- Is an infant (younger than 12 months of age).
- Has not had their shots (been immunized).
- Has a weakened immune system due to illness or medicines they take.
- Has symptoms that are common to measles

When to Call 911

Call 911 if you think your child has measles or has:

- Problems breathing
- Breathing very fast
- Sucking in of the skin between the ribs when breathing (retractions)
- Turning blue around the mouth
- Appears very ill

Returning to School or Child Care

- Notify your child's school or child care if they have measles. Cases of measles should be reported to the local health department.
- Children infected with measles should stay away from others and not attend school or child care until 5 days after the rash started.