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# Measles

## What is measles?

Measles is a serious respiratory disease that causes a rash and fever. It is very contagious. You can catch it just by being in a room where someone with measles coughed or sneezed.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms appear about 10 to 12 days after a person is exposed to measles. The first symptoms are usually:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red watery eyes
- Rash
  - Small red spots, some of which are slightly raised
  - Spots and bumps in tight clusters give the skin a splotchy red appearance.
  - Usually appears 2 to 4 days after the fever begins and lasts 5 to 6 days.
  - Begins at the hairline, moves to the face and neck, down the body and then to the arms and legs.

## What are the complications of measles?

Common complications from measles include diarrhea, ear infections and pneumonia. Measles can cause serious illness requiring hospitalization. A small number of people with measles will get a brain infection that can lead to permanent brain damage and some people will die from complications. Measles during pregnancy increases the risk of early labor, miscarriage and low birth weight infants. Measles can be more severe in people with weak immune systems.

## How long is a person with measles contagious?

A person with measles can pass it to others from 4 days *before* a rash appears through the 4th day *after* the rash appears.

## Is there a treatment for measles?

There is no treatment but acetaminophen and ibuprofen may be taken to reduce a fever. People with measles also need bed rest and fluids. They also may need treatment for complications such as diarrhea, an ear infection or pneumonia.

## If my child or another family member has been exposed to measles, what should I do?

Immediately call your local health department, doctor or clinic for advice. Never been vaccinated? Get the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine within 3 days of being exposed. This may prevent you from getting measles. Some people may need an immune globulin shot -- antibodies to the measles virus. It should be given within 6 days of being exposed. This may prevent or lessen the severity of measles.

## What is the best way to prevent measles?

*Getting the measles vaccine is the best way to prevent measles.*

- You are considered immune to measles if you have written proof of 2 valid doses of MMR vaccine, or other live, measles-containing vaccine.
- You are also considered immune to measles if you have a written lab report of immunity, or you were born before 1957.
- Anyone who lacks proof of measles immunity, as defined above, should receive at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Two doses of MMR vaccine are recommended for some groups of adults. This includes health care personnel, college students, and international travelers. The doses should be given at least 28 days apart.

*We recommend that all children get the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine.*

- Children should get their first MMR shot at 12 through 15 months old (as soon as possible within this time period). The second dose may be given as soon as one month after the first dose. But it is usually given between 4 and 6 years of age.
- An early dose of MMR vaccine is recommended for children 6-11 months of age who will be traveling internationally. These children will still need the 2 routine doses given at 12-15 months and 4-6 years of age to ensure protection. They will receive a total of 3 MMR vaccines.

## What are the MMR vaccine requirements for school attendance?

- For pre-kindergarten including day care, Head Start or nursery school: one dose of MMR vaccine
- Kindergarten to grade 12: two doses of MMR vaccine
- College: two doses of MMR vaccine

## What should I do if I'm not sure I was vaccinated against measles?

Check with your doctor. If you were born before 1957 it's likely that you have been exposed to the virus and are immune. If you were born between 1957 and 1971 when vaccines weren't as reliable, ask your doctor if you've been properly vaccinated.

## What should I or my family members do to prevent measles if we are traveling out of the country?

Measles is still common in many other countries. Make sure that you and your children are fully vaccinated before traveling out of the U.S.

- Children, adults and adolescents should have two doses of MMR vaccine, at least 28 days apart.
- An early dose of MMR vaccine is recommended for children 6-12 months of age who will be traveling internationally. This dose does not count as part of the routine doses given at 12-15 months and 4-6 years of age. These children will need a total of 3 MMR vaccinations.

## Travel and measles:

[www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html](http://www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html)

## Learn more about measles:

[www.cdc.gov/measles](http://www.cdc.gov/measles)

## How can I find out about measles outbreaks?

[www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html](http://www.cdc.gov/measles/cases-outbreaks.html)

## For more information about vaccine-preventable diseases:

[www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/)

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## Bureau of Immunization