



Frequently Asked Questions

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious rash illness caused by a virus. Although measles is commonly thought of as a childhood disease, people of any age can get it.

Measles can be spread to others from four days before to four days after the rash appears. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90 percent of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected with the measles virus.

The virus lives in the mucus of the nose and throat of the infected person. When that person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray into the air. The droplets can get into other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouth or nose after touching an infected surface. The virus spreads so easily that people who are not immune will probably get it when they come close to someone who is infected.

Possible complications of measles are pneumonia, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), ear infections, diarrhea, seizures, and death. These complications are more common in children under age 5 years and adults over age 20 years.

Measles can be prevented with vaccination.

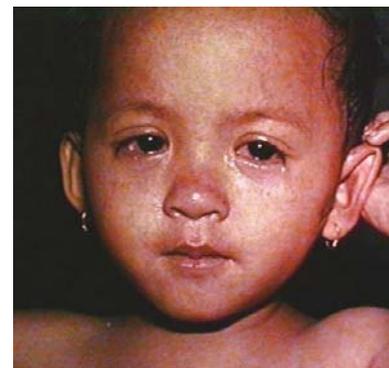
Who is at risk?

Persons at risk of measles infection are those who are not immune, either because they have not been vaccinated (including infants less than one year of age and persons who are immunocompromised), they did not respond to vaccination, or they have not had measles disease.

What are the symptoms of measles?

The symptoms of measles generally begin about 14 days after a person is infected (range 7 to 21 days), and include:

- Blotchy red rash
- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Feeling run down, achy (malaise)
- Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth (Koplik's spots—not always present)



Measles photo gallery: <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/photos.html>

A typical case of measles begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik's spots) may appear inside the mouth.

Three to five days after the start of symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears. The rash usually begins on a person's face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

After a few days, the fever subsides and the rash fades.

What should I do if I think I have measles?

People who suspect they have measles, that is, fever and widespread rash, should call their doctor right away and isolate themselves from others to help contain the spread of illness

For how long is a person with measles contagious?

A person is contagious from 4 days before to at least 4 days after the start of rash. Infected persons with an immunocompromising condition may be contagious for longer.

What is the treatment for measles?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Care of patients with measles consists mainly of providing fluids, bed rest, and fever control.

How can I keep from getting it?

The best way to prevent measles is to get vaccinated. Everyone check their immunization status and contact their healthcare provider if they need to be vaccinated.

All children should receive 2 doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The first dose should be given at 12-15 months of age. A second dose is recommended at 4 to 6 years of age.

Unvaccinated adults born after 1956 should receive at least one dose of measles vaccine, unless they have had a blood test showing they are immune to measles. Adults at increased risk of getting measles (college students, international travelers, and health care workers) should receive two doses, at least 4 weeks apart.

Pregnant women and people with a life threatening allergic reaction to gelatin, neomycin, or a previous dose of MMR vaccine should not receive the MMR vaccine. Persons with immune system problems or who are moderately or severely ill should consult with their doctor about whether they should be vaccinated.

For more information about the MMR vaccine, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/mmr.pdf>.

For a list of pharmacies that provide MMR vaccine, go to http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/files/2013/07/IMM_Adult_Resource_List.pdf.

People without health insurance may call Aloha United Way 2-1-1 for assistance.

Should a person with measles stay home from work or school?

Yes. Any person diagnosed with measles should stay away from school or work for 4 days after the rash begins.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about measles, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>.