

Measles

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



What is measles?

Measles is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. Measles is spread easily from person to person through the air when someone coughs or sneezes.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles starts with a fever (as high as 105°F), cough, runny nose and watery eyes. About 14 days after a person is exposed, a rash appears and spreads from the head to the feet.

How is measles spread?

Measles is spread through the air when someone coughs or sneezes. The measles virus can also float in the air for up to two hours after someone with measles coughs or sneezes indoors. Someone who breathes air containing the measles virus can get measles.

People with measles can spread the disease to others from 4 days before the rash starts (before they know they have the disease), through 4 days after the rash begins.

Is there a treatment for measles?

There is no treatment for the measles virus. Most people with measles will get better on their own with rest, plenty of fluids and if needed, acetaminophen (Tylenol) to reduce the fever.

Some people, especially children under five years old can experience serious health conditions including infection, pneumonia, and swelling of the brain.

What does it mean to be exposed to measles?

You can be exposed to the measles virus by being in the same room, home, office, or waiting room with someone who has measles or by being there up to two hours after the person with measles has left.

What does it mean to be immune to measles?

Someone is considered immune to measles, if their body has already learned how to fight off the virus causing them to not get sick when exposed.

There are three ways a person can become immune to measles:

- They had measles in the past
- They received two doses of the measles vaccine
- They were born before 1957

How can measles be prevented?

1. ***The best way to prevent measles is to get vaccinated.***
 - The measles vaccine is very safe and effective. One dose of the measles vaccine is about 93% effective at preventing measles if exposed to the virus. Two doses are about 97% effective.
 - People who received two doses of measles vaccine are protected for life, and do not need a booster dose.
2. ***Wash your hands often with soap and water.***
3. ***Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing***
4. ***Avoid close contact with people who are sick.***

More information on measles: www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html

Updated 3/11/2019