

What is Measles?

Measles is a serious disease caused by a virus that spreads easily from person to person. Measles causes fever, rash, and other complications. It may be called Rubeola, the 10-day, hard or red measles. Measles is prevented by vaccination. There are other viral, rash illnesses that are usually milder.

What are the Symptoms of Measles?

- Symptoms start 10 – 12 days (range is 7-21 days) after a person is around someone with measles. The symptoms last for 1 to 2 weeks.
- The illness starts with a high fever (over 101 °F) followed by a runny nose, watery red eyes, and a cough. This is known as the prodrome.
- Tiny, blue-white spots usually appear inside the mouth during the first few days,
- A raised, red rash appears along the hairline about 14 days after exposure. The rash then moves to the face and spreads down the trunk and back of the body before it moves out over the arms and legs. The rash usually lasts 4 to 7 days.
- People with measles are contagious from 4 days before (during prodrome) until at least 4 days after the rash begins.

What about Complications of Measles Disease?

- Complications occur most frequently in children younger than 5 years and adults older than 20 years.
- Complications of measles may include ear infections, diarrhea, pneumonia, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and death.
- Measles in pregnant women can cause miscarriages or premature delivery.

How is Measles Spread?

- Measles is spread from person to person. The virus that causes measles is found in droplets and secretions from the nose and throat of a person with measles.
- Measles virus is highly contagious and can stay suspended in the air in a closed room for up to two hours.
- A person entering the room is exposed even after the person with measles has left the room.

Who is at Risk of Getting Measles?

- Anyone who is not immune to measles.

How do I know if I am Immune?

- **Adults born before 1957 are generally considered immune because they more than likely have had measles disease.**
 - Last major USA outbreak was in 1956. If you know you did not have Measles or lived fairly isolated, you may not have been exposed to measles and may be at risk.
- **Adults and children born after January 1, 1957 are considered immune if:**
 - they have had measles disease, or
 - a laboratory test confirming that they have immunity to measles, or
 - *they have documentation of two doses of MMR vaccine given after 1968.

(NOTE: Washington State Law requires that children receive a 2nd (MMR) Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccination before entry into Kindergarten. A second MMR dose has been required for school aged children since 1992. Many colleges and schools of higher education now require proof of a second MMR for school entry.

Which unvaccinated Individuals are at Increased Risk for Exposure to Measles and should consider vaccination now?

- Persons attending college and other post-high school educational institutions
- Persons working in facilities with a lot of international students, workers or travelers.
- Persons working in medical facilities – documentation of immunity or two doses of MMR
- International travelers
- Any person who has not had measles vaccine and has not had a history of having had measles disease that has been confirmed by a laboratory test.

Are there Individuals who should not receive the Measles (MMR) Vaccine?

Individuals should not receive the MMR if they:

- have had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine component or following a prior dose
 - are pregnant
 - are taking medications or have conditions that suppress their ability to fight infections
 - have moderate to severe illness right now
 - Recent (≤ 11 months) receipt of antibody-containing blood product (specific interval depends on product)
- ❖ studies have demonstrated the safety of MMR in egg-allergic children

What can I do to Prevent Measles?

- People with a rash illness and fever should limit their contact with others until at least 4 full days have passed since the time when their rash first appeared.
- People diagnosed with measles should limit their contact with others until at least 4 full days have passed since the time when their rash first appeared.
- People who are exposed to someone who have measles should contact their health care provider immediately. If they have **not** been vaccinated, measles vaccine can help prevent infection if it is given **within three days (72 hours)** of exposure. They should limit going out and the possibility of exposing others from 5-21 days after they have been exposed
- Immune globulin, when given within six days of exposure, may help prevent infection for those who cannot receive the MMR vaccine.
- Make sure family members are fully vaccinated. Washington State law requires that all children have a record of immunization against measles for entry into school or a child day care center or preschool.
- The measles vaccine is combined with other vaccines. The vaccine most often given as the MMR (measles mumps rubella) vaccine.
- The 1st MMR vaccine is given to children when they are 12 to 15 months of age.
- For children attending school in Washington State, two doses of measles containing vaccine is required for school entry.