

MEASLES

WHAT IS MEASLES?

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. The virus lives in the nose and throat of an infected person and is spread through coughing and sneezing. You become infected when you breathe in the contaminated air or touch the infected surface and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth. The infected person can spread measles to other people 4 days before and up to 4 days after the rash appears.

WHO IS AT RISK FOR MEASLES?

- Unvaccinated young children and pregnant women
- Persons travelling to developing countries (measles is common in Asia and Africa)
- Persons with vitamin A deficiency

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MEASLES

- High fever
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Red and watery eyes
- Tiny white spots appearing inside the mouth
- Red rash covering the whole body (usually occurs 3 to 4 days after symptoms begin)

COMPLICATIONS OF MEASLES

- Ear infections
- Severe diarrhea
- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Inflammation and swelling of the brain

DIAGNOSIS OF MEASLES

Your doctor can make a diagnosis based on your symptoms and a blood test.

PREVENTION OF MEASLES

Measles can be prevented with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. It is recommended that all children receive two doses of MMR vaccine. The first shot should be given to children 12 to 15 months of age and the second shot should be given 4 through 6 years of age. It is also recommended that students ages 12-18 get 2 doses of MMR shots if they do not have evidence of immunity against measles. Adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine, though some may need two doses. Consult with your health care provider to determine what is right for you.

TREATMENT

There is no treatment for measles infection. However, some steps can be taken to protect at risk individuals who have been exposed to the virus and lessen the severity of symptoms:

- MMR vaccine given within 72 hours of measles exposure to infants or adults who are not immunized against the disease
- Immune serum globulin (IG) injection given within 6 days of measles exposure to pregnant women, infants and persons with weakened immunity
- Antibiotics for eyes, ears, and lung infections
- Fever reducing medications
- Vitamin A supplements
- Fluids

If you're unsure whether you have been vaccinated against measles, contact your doctor for your immunization records or have your blood tested for immunity against measles.

For more information about measles:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/>