

Measles

Measles is a viral disease that causes fever and a rash. In rare cases, it causes serious complications and even death.

What are the signs and symptoms of Measles?

Symptoms:

- Fever
- Runny Nose
- Cough
- Loss of appetite
- Conjunctivitis
- Rash lasting 5-6 days

Measles usually starts with a fever, runny nose, cough, and red, watery eyes. After two to four days of these symptoms, a rash develops, which usually starts on the face and spreads downward to cover most of the body. The rash lasts at least three days, but often a week or more. About 30 percent of people who contract measles develop one or more complications such as diarrhea, ear infection(s), and pneumonia. Although rare, measles can cause very serious complications such as encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), seizures, brain damage, and/or death. Measles should not be confused with rubella (also known as “German” or “three-day” measles), which is a milder illness.

How is measles spread and how long is someone contagious?

Measles spreads easily when infected people cough or sneeze and spray droplets into the air, which others then breathe in. The virus can remain in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves a room. Measles can also be spread when discharge from the nose or mouth of an infected person comes in contact with the mouth, nose, or eyes of another person. Measles is most contagious during the four or five days before and four days after the rash appears. This means the virus can spread before infected people know they're sick.

How do you become diagnosed and what's the treatment?

Diagnosis should be made by your healthcare provider and usually requires laboratory testing. Call your healthcare provider before showing up to prevent others from getting ill. There is no specific treatment for measles, but there is a highly effective vaccine to prevent infection before it occurs.

How do you prevent measles?

The measles vaccine, which is contained in the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine, can prevent the disease (2 doses are needed for optimal protection). The first dose of the MMR vaccine is routinely given at age 12 – 15 months and the second dose at 4 – 6 years of age. If someone exposed to measles has not been vaccinated, the measles vaccine may prevent the disease if given within 72 hours of exposure. The Colorado School Immunization Rules requires students in K through 12 to have two measles immunizations and childcare/preschool students 15 months of age to Kindergarten to have one dose of rubella vaccine unless the student has an exemption to immunization.