



MEASLES

Frequently Asked Questions About Measles

What is measles?

Measles is an acute infection caused by the measles virus. It starts with fever, cough, runny nose, and conjunctivitis (pink eye) or red eyes. A red rash occurs a few days later on the face and upper neck, then spreads down the back, trunk, and arms and legs.

How can I catch measles?

Measles is very contagious. It is spread mainly through respiratory droplets from infected people. Infected people are most contagious from about 4 days before their rash appears until 4 days afterwards. Routine measles vaccination of children has made measles a rare disease in the U.S. However, measles is still seen in this country, usually associated with a visitor to the U.S. or a traveler returning from other countries.

Are there complications of measles?

Approximately 20% of reported measles cases experience one or more complications. These complications are more common among children under 5 years of age and adults over 20 years. Ear infections (otitis media) occur in nearly one out of 10 children with measles. Diarrhea can also occur. Measles can also cause pneumonia and less commonly encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), hearing loss, seizures and even death. Measles can also make a pregnant woman miscarry, give birth prematurely, or have a low-birth-weight baby.

What is the treatment for measles?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Supportive care is recommended to alleviate symptoms. **Call your doctor** if you have symptoms.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Initial symptoms commonly appear 8-12 days after exposure to an infected person, with rash appearing a few days later. **If you have been exposed to measles and develop fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, or rash, stay home and call your health care provider immediately.**

How long is an infected person able to spread the disease?

Infected people are most contagious from about 4 days before their rash starts until 4 days afterwards. People who are diagnosed with measles should stay home until 4 days after the start of the rash.

How is measles diagnosed?

Measles is diagnosed clinically and by laboratory testing. Throat, respiratory, urine, or blood specimens may be requested. **Before seeing your health care provider, call ahead and let them know you may have measles so appropriate measures are taken in the office to prevent infection of others.**

How can measles be prevented?

There is a vaccine available to prevent measles. For more information:
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/default.htm>.