

Protect Yourself from Measles

Immunization Program • May 2014

Measles is a serious respiratory disease caused by a virus. It spreads easily by coughing and sneezing. Measles can cause pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and even death.

Most people exposed to measles will not develop the disease because:

- they have been vaccinated, or
- they had measles in the past before vaccination became routine

Symptoms

Signs of measles appear about 7-14 days after a person is exposed to an infected person. Measles usually begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, and sometimes red eyes. Several days after the start of these symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears, usually starting on a person's face at the hairline and spreading downward to the entire body.



At the time the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit. The rash typically lasts at least a few days and then disappears in the same order.

People with measles may be contagious up to four days before the rash appears and for four days after the rash appears.

Measles virus is very contagious, so when one person is infected, it is easy for the disease to spread. People showing signs of measles should call their doctor first. Call before going to a healthcare facility to prevent exposing others.

The single best way to prevent measles is to be vaccinated.

Children

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend that children receive their first dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine at 12-15 months. School-aged children need two doses of MMR vaccine.

Adults

Adults should have at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Certain groups at higher risk for exposure to measles need two doses of MMR, such as international travelers, health care workers, and college students. Adults born in the U.S. before 1957 are considered immune to measles from past exposures. In situations where exposure to measles is likely, these adults may benefit from a dose of MMR vaccine.

For more information about measles, please visit www.cdc.gov/measles.

KEY POINTS:

- Measles is highly contagious
- It can be serious
- Protect yourself by getting vaccinated
- Know the signs and symptoms and contact your health provider if you have concerns