

Measles is caused by a virus. Before the vaccine became widely used in the 1960s, most children got measles. Before that time nearly 50,000 people were hospitalized and 400-500 people would die each year. Measles is rare in the US these days. Now only people who have not had the vaccine get measles.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms start 1 to 2 weeks after being around someone with measles. Symptoms often start with:

- High fever (103-105° F or 39-40° C)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- After a few days tiny white spots may appear in the mouth
- Rash - 3-5 days after symptoms start

The rash begins at the hairline and spreads down and out, all the way to the hands and feet.

COMPLICATIONS

Complications include:

- ear infections
- pneumonia (fluid in the lungs)
- encephalitis (swelling of the brain that can cause seizures, deafness and mental problems)

Out of every 1000 children that get the measles in the US, one or two children die. Measles can also cause a pregnant woman to lose her baby or give birth early.

TREATMENT

There is no medicine to treat measles. The symptoms of measles are treated with bed rest, drugs to lower fever and humid air.

HOW IT SPREADS

The virus that causes measles lives in the nose and back of the throat. It spreads easily when a person sick with measles coughs or sneezes. The virus can live in the air and on things for up to 2 hours. Other people get infected when they breathe in the virus or touch things with the virus on them and then touch their own nose or mouth. Measles spreads so easily that if one person has it, 90% of the people nearby, who are not immune, will also become infected.

HOW TO PREVENT MEASLES—READ THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PAGE

Vaccination

The best way to prevent measles is through vaccination. The vaccine that protects against measles also protects against mumps and rubella (MMR).

Children (and adults who haven't been vaccinated) need 2 doses of MMR to be fully protected against measles (mumps and rubella). Most children in the US get MMR vaccine between 12-15 months and again at 4-6 years of age.

Measles is rarely seen in the US anymore, since most people are vaccinated against it as children. However, measles is still common in many parts of the world. Visitors to the US and unvaccinated travelers returning from other countries can bring measles into the US causing outbreaks among people that have not been vaccinated.

Practice Good Health Manners

Cough and sneeze into your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. Wash hands after throwing the tissue away (see below).

Handwashing

Wash hands often, especially if you are sick.

MORE ABOUT HANDWASHING

How to Wash



1. Wet



2. Soap



3. Scrub 15 –20 seconds



4. Rinse



5. Dry



6. Use towel to turn off faucet

WHEN TO WASH

- Before and after eating
- Before, during and after making and touching food
- After using the bathroom or helping a child use the bathroom
- After changing or checking a diaper
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose and after wiping a child's nose
- After touching blood or body fluids (urine, feces, vomit, etc)
- After touching animals or their waste
- After touching trash
- After touching money
- Whenever hands look, feel or smell dirty

Washing hands is the best way to prevent the spread of many illnesses. No soap and water? Use a hand sanitizer made with alcohol (follow package directions) – then wash with soap and water as soon as you can.