

# Measles (Rubeola)

## Knowing the facts



Measles are caused by the *measles virus*; a paramyxovirus. Measles are also called rubeola, red measles, or hard measles. Measles is in an increasingly rare infection in the United States because of childhood immunization against the disease.



### Did You Know?

Although more than half of all countries now use measles vaccine, measles still remain a common disease in many parts of the world. An occurrence here in the US would generally be found in unvaccinated children or adults exposed to an infected person from another country.

#### How is measles spread?

Measles are spread to others by droplets that are expelled during sneezing and coughing, and by direct contact with nasal and throat secretions of infected persons.

#### What are the symptoms of measles?

Initial symptoms are cold-like symptoms that include fever, watery eyes, runny nose, and hacking cough. A red blotchy rash appears on the 3rd to 7th day, usually beginning on the neck and face, spreading down the trunk and out the arms and legs. Measles is often complicated by an ear infection or pneumonia. In serious cases, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) may occur that can lead to convulsions, deafness, or mental retardation. Death is rare.

#### How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms commonly appear 10-12 days after exposure.

#### When and for how long is a person able to spread measles?

Measles is highly contagious. A person is usually able to transmit measles from 4 days before the onset of rash to 4 days after the appearance of the rash. Of those not immunized, 90% of them will become infected with measles upon close contact with an infected person.

#### What is the treatment for measles?

There is no treatment for measles— only supportive care for symptoms

### How do I prevent the spread of measles?

- Get immunized or check your immunization status for the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. Although measles may seem like a harmless childhood illness it can have serious health consequences for infants who are too young to be vaccinated and people with other health conditions.
- Persons born before 1957 are generally considered to be immune to measles.
- Children or adults who have measles must remain isolated and excluded from school and work for 4 days after symptom onset. Unvaccinated persons must remain excluded from school and work for 21 days after the last case of measles is present in the facility where the exposure occurred.
- Once exposure has occurred vaccine may prevent disease if given to unvaccinated persons within 72 hours.
- If you suspect that your child has the measles, keep him or her home and contact your physician to arrange for a visit and diagnosis
- Report all cases to the local health department