

Facts & DETAILS

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by the measles virus.

How common is measles?

Measles remains a common disease in many parts of the world, including areas in Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. In the United States, cases are rare; most result from international travel.

How do people become infected?

Measles is spread in the air and also by droplets from sneezing and coughing. If someone breathes air contaminated by measles virus or touches an infected surface then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth, they can become infected. Measles virus can live for up to two hours in the air and is so contagious that 90% of unvaccinated people close to an infected person will also become infected with measles.

What are the signs and symptoms of measles?

The first symptoms include mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two to three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots may appear inside the mouth. Three to five days after symptoms begin, a red or reddish-brown rash that begins on the hairline and spreads down appears. When the rash appears, the person's fever may spike to 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

How long can you spread measles?

After exposure, symptoms usually appear in 7 to 14 days. Someone with measles is contagious from four days before rash to four days after rash appears and should remain isolated at home to prevent the spread of disease.

Who is at risk for measles?

Anyone who is not vaccinated can get measles, but people at risk for complications are children less than 5 years old, adults over 20 years old, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems.

How is measles treated?

Measles is caused by a virus, so antibiotics won't work, and there is no specific treatment.

How can you prevent measles?

The best way to prevent measles is to be vaccinated with the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. The MMR vaccine is 97% effective at preventing measles. Prevent infections by washing your hands and avoiding sharing eating and drinking utensils.

Make sure your shots are up to date. MMR vaccine can be obtained from the Sedgwick County Health Department, 2716 West Central Avenue, Wichita, Kansas.

- The first MMR dose is recommended at age 12-15 months.
- The second MMR dose is recommended at age 4-6 years.
- People born before 1957 are considered immune.
- People born after 1957 who have not had the disease or any MMR vaccine should be vaccinated.

For more information, visit the Sedgwick County Health Department's website at www.sedgwickcounty.org or schd.online/measles.

