

Measles is a respiratory virus that can cause serious illness.

The measles virus commonly causes fever, rash, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. Measles may also lead to serious complications, including hospitalization and even death. Anyone who is not immune can get sick with measles at any age. Persons who are younger than 5, older than 20, immunocompromised, or pregnant are more likely to have serious health issues from measles.



Measles is highly contagious.

Measles is spread through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes. The virus can remain in the air for up to 2 hours after the infected person leaves the area. The disease is also spread by direct contact and after touching infected surfaces. A person can spread measles from 4 days before through 4 days after the rash begins. The measles virus is so contagious that if exposed, 9 out of 10 nonimmune persons may become sick with measles.

Measles can cause many different symptoms.

The first signs of measles include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Small white spots inside the mouth

A rash then appears in about 3 to 5 days. The measles rash usually starts as red spots on the face and head, then spreads downwards to the neck, chest, back, arms, legs, and feet.



Measles symptoms usually appear 11 to 12 days after exposure to the measles virus.

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To learn more, visit
health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/IMMUN/Pages/Measles.aspx

Laboratory testing is needed to confirm a measles infection.

People who think they have measles should immediately contact a health care provider or local health department for guidance.



Before going to be evaluated, it is very important to call ahead so appropriate precautions can be taken.

There is no specific treatment for measles.

While there is no treatment that acts against the virus that causes measles, people with measles can get treatment to help with their symptoms, such as fluids and acetaminophen (Tylenol) to help with fever.

People in possible contact with measles should contact their health care provider or local health department.

Contact your health care provider or local health department immediately if you think you have been in contact with someone with measles. Certain persons who are exposed to measles (such as those who are not vaccinated against measles) may be able to get the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine or a medicine called immunoglobulin (IG) to prevent them from developing measles infection.

Measles can be prevented with a measles vaccine.

The best protection against measles is to receive the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. One dose of MMR vaccine is 93% effective against getting measles if exposed. Two doses are 97% effective.

The MMR vaccine is given as a 2-dose series, the first dose at 12-15 months old, and the second dose at 4-6 years old. Two doses of MMR vaccine are required to enroll or attend school in Maryland.

People planning to travel internationally should be fully vaccinated against measles at least 2 weeks before departure. Infants under 12 months of age who will travel internationally should get an early dose of MMR vaccine at 6 to 11 months.

To learn more about the MMR vaccine, visit: [cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/mmr.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/current-vis/mmr.html)