

FACT SHEET

Measles

Measles is a viral disease that is highly contagious. In 1912 it became a notifiable disease in the United States and in 1963 the first vaccine was developed. Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the virus can remain in the room for two hours after the infected person has left. One person can spread it to many others if the other people in the room are not protected. <http://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/signs-symptoms.html>. Worldwide approximately 20 million are infected with measles and 146,000 people, mostly children, die from the disease each year. It remains a concerning cause of death among young children globally, despite the development of a safe and effective vaccine. <http://www.who.int/immunization/diseases/measles/en/>

Cause: The *morbillivirus* virus causes measles. It is spread primarily through coughing and sneezing. It is recognizable by the well documented rash that spreads over most of the body.

Symptoms: Symptoms begin within two weeks after infection: fever, runny nose, bloodshot eyes, and tiny white spots inside the mouth (Koplik spots). Several days later a rash appears on the face and neck that spreads down the body. Most individuals will feel very ill for about a week while 30% of people develop serious complications: severe diarrhea and dehydration, blindness, swelling of the brain and pneumonia.

Spread: Measles is spread by airborne transmission with mucus or droplets from the nose or throat of an infected person, usually when a person coughs or sneezes. It grows in the nose, throat and surrounding lymph nodes and spreads to other areas of the body.

Incubation: symptoms may begin 10-12 days after being exposed

Contagious Period: People are most infectious before showing signs or symptoms from four days before developing the measles rash through four days afterward.

Precautions: Infants, children and adults who are under immunized or unimmunized should be excluded from school or work until four days after the rash

has disappeared. Those who are immune compromised are at also at greater risk.

Prevention:

The best way to protect against measles is to get the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR vaccine). Doctors recommend that all children get the MMR vaccine. Anyone who has not received 2 doses of a measles-containing vaccine (preferably MMR vaccine) should be vaccinated. Pregnant women should not receive the vaccine. Pregnancy should be avoided for 4 weeks after vaccination with MMR. The use of good coughing/handwashing techniques helps in controlling illnesses. Persons who may have been exposed should be educated on the signs and symptoms of measles disease and should seek medical attention as soon as any of these symptoms begin.

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/pinkbook/downloads/measles.pdf>

Diagnosis and Treatment:

There is no specific treatment. Supportive care should be given as indicated. **Anyone with measles should not go back to child care, school or work until 4 days after the rash has disappeared and no longer symptomatic.** Contacts to a measles case should have their immunization status evaluated.

<http://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>