

What is measles?

Measles is a very contagious illness caused by a virus. This means it spreads very easily to others.



→ How common is measles?

Measles is rare in the U.S. because so many people have been vaccinated against it. However, anyone in the U.S. who is unvaccinated can still get measles. Every year unvaccinated travelers bring measles to the U.S. from other countries. So even if you and your family do not travel outside the U.S., measles could still spread in your community.

→ How do people get measles?

Measles spreads very easily between people. Here's how it spreads:

- 1 A person sick with measles coughs or sneezes, sending tiny droplets containing the virus into the air.
- 2 Those tiny droplets then stay in the air or get onto a surface.
- 3 Another person then gets infected with measles when they:
 - Breathe in that air, or
 - Touch that surface then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth



Measles can be dangerous, especially for:

- Babies and children under age 5
- Adults older than age 20
- People who are pregnant
- People with weakened immune systems

→ What are the symptoms of measles?

- 1-2 weeks after being exposed to measles, first symptoms are usually:



High fever (can be up to 104°F)



Cough



Runny nose



Red, watery eyes

- 2-3 days after symptoms start:



Tiny white spots may appear in the mouth

- 3-5 days after symptoms start:



A rash breaks out - it usually begins with flat red spots on the forehead. It then spreads down the face, neck, and rest of the body.

→ Can measles be prevented?



Yes! Measles can be prevented with the 2-dose MMR vaccine, which protects against 3 diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella.

- If you have a young child, they can get their:
 - 1st dose at 12-15 months old
 - 2nd dose at 4-6 years old
- If your child is younger than 12 months old, and will be traveling outside the U.S., they can get an extra dose early, but will still need 2 more doses:
 - 1st dose at 6-11 months old
 - 2nd dose at 12-15 months old
 - 3rd dose at 4-6 years old
- If you or your child did not get the MMR vaccine at the recommended ages, you can get your:
 - 1st dose at any time
 - Talk to your doctor about when to get the 2nd dose, which must be at least 4 weeks later

Why is measles so contagious?

- A person with measles can spread the virus for a long time - from 4 days before their rash to 4 days after.
- Droplets that contain the virus can live in the air for up to 2 hours, so anyone breathing in that air for the next 2 hours could get infected.



Measles can also cause serious health problems such as:

- Eye and ear infections
- Pneumonia (lung infection)
- Encephalitis (brain swelling)
- Low vitamin A, which can cause blindness
- Even hospitalization or death

→ Where can I learn more about measles?

CDC's measles page:
[cdc.gov/measles/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html)



Your child may be able to get a no-cost measles vaccine through the CDC's Vaccine for Children (VFC) program:
[cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/parents/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/programs/vfc/parents/index.html)



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