

Measles

What is measles?

Measles (also called rubeola) is a very contagious viral illness that can be prevented by vaccination.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Symptoms appear approximately 10 days after a person has been exposed to someone with measles. Measles usually causes a rash, high fever, cough, runny nose, and water eyes. Illness can last one to two weeks. The rash typically begins on the face and then spreads downward over the entire body. This rash generally lasts 4 to 7 days. Measles may be complicated by an ear infection or pneumonia. Other less common complications include deafness, blindness, seizure disorders, swelling of the brain, and death. Approximately one child in every 10,000 who gets measles dies from it.

How do people get measles?

The virus that causes measles is produced in the nose and throat and is spread to others through the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs, or talks. People nearby can then inhale the virus. Measles is also spread by direct contact with the nasal and throat secretions, such as through touching soiled tissues or sharing a cup used by an infected person. People with measles can spread the disease from 4 days before to 4 days after the start of the rash.

Who can get measles?

Anyone who has never had measles and has not been vaccinated, children younger than 12

months of age, because they are too young to have been vaccinated, and adults who were last vaccinated before 1968, because some early vaccines did not give lasting protection. Adults born prior to 1957 are generally considered to be immune to measles because they would have been exposed.

What is the treatment for measles?

There is no specific treatment for measles except to deal with the symptoms, such as cough, fever, and itching.

How common is measles?

Measles is very common in developing countries around the world. An estimated 43 million cases occur every year, with more than 1 million deaths. In the United States about 350 cases are reported each year. Most of these cases are in people who became infected in other countries.

How can measles be prevented?

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that children receive their first dose of measles-containing vaccine between the ages of 12 and 15 months. Children 15 months and older are required to have one dose of measles vaccine for child care and school admittance. A second dose of measles vaccine is then given between ages 4 and 6.

If I have measles, can I go to work or school?

Children and adults with suspected or confirmed measles infection shall be excluded

from school or work for at least four days after the appearance of the rash.

Is measles reportable?

Measles is a reportable disease in New Hampshire which means health care providers are required to immediately notify the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services at 603-271-4496 or 1-800-852-3345 x4496 for recommendations and assistance about prevention and the spread of this illness.

For specific concerns about measles, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at www.dhhs.nh.gov .