

Measles *Fact Sheet*

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious illness characterized by a fever and rash.

How is it spread?

Measles spreads from person to person through respiratory droplets when someone with measles coughs, sneezes or talks.

The virus can live in the air for up to two hours. A person with measles can spread the virus to others from 4 days before to 4 days after the rash appears.



Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear 7 to 14 days after exposure, but can take up to 21 days and can include:

High fever.

Runny nose.

Red, watery eyes.

Cough.

Koplik spots (tiny white spots) in the mouth.

A rash generally appears 3 to 5 days after symptoms start, beginning on the head and face, then spreading downward. The rash is made up of small raised or flat red bumps that may join as the rash progresses.

Complications

Mild complications include diarrhea and ear infection. Severe complications include pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain), which can lead to hospitalization or even death. Measles during pregnancy can cause miscarriage or premature delivery.

About 1 in 5 people with measles will be hospitalized.

Who's at risk?

Up to 90% of people exposed to a person with measles who are not immune or protected against measles will become infected. Children younger than 5 years old, adults over 20 years old, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for measles-related complications.

Prevention

The best way to protect against measles is with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about **97% effective at preventing measles** and one dose is about 93% effective. If you plan to travel, talk with your health care provider to make sure your vaccinations are up to date.

For more information, visit [CDC.gov/Measles](https://www.cdc.gov/Measles) or [Michigan.gov/Measles](https://www.michigan.gov/Measles).