

Measles: What you need to know to keep your child safe

A disease from the past coming back

Measles is a disease caused by the measles virus. Measles can be dangerous, especially for infants and young children.

1 out of every 4 people who get measles in the United States will be hospitalized. 1 or 2 out of every 1,000 children in the United States who get measles will die from the disease, even with the best care.

Measles can cause serious health problems, such as:

- Pneumonia, an infection of the lungs.
- Brain damage caused by swelling.
- Deafness.

Signs and symptoms

Symptoms of measles start showing seven to 14 days after getting infected. The first symptoms of measles may include:

- Fever, sometimes over 104° Fahrenheit or 40 ° Celsius
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Red, watery eyes
- Sore throat
- Tiredness

These early symptoms are followed by a rash that spreads over the body. The rash tends to appear three to five days after the first symptoms.

Measles can be serious in all age groups. However, there are several groups that are more likely to suffer from measles complications:

- Children younger than 5 years
- Adults older than 20 years
- Pregnant women
- People with compromised immune systems, such as from leukemia or HIV infection

Common complications can include ear infections and diarrhea. Severe complications include pneumonia (infection of the lungs), encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and death.

Prevention

You can protect your children through safe and effective vaccination. The vaccine used to prevent measles in the U.S. does not cause measles.

The MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella. Two doses of the vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles.

Children should be vaccinated when they are 12-15 months and again when they are 4-6 years, before starting school. If you are traveling to other countries, you will need to vaccinate at younger ages.

Hand washing and good hygiene practices are also important in reducing the spread of measles.

These instructions are only general guidelines. Your health care provider may give you special instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call your health care provider.