

Measles



What Is It?

Measles is a serious disease caused by a virus. Although rare today because of immunization, there are occasional outbreaks when children have not been fully immunized.

What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms begin with fever, red and watery eyes, runny nose, cough and tiredness followed by a reddish-brown blotchy rash. The rash usually starts on the face, spreads down the body, and lasts three or more days. Most children with measles become quite ill, but recover with no ill effects. Occasionally, however, measles can lead to pneumonia or swelling of the brain and permanent disability or death. Adults and very young children tend to have more severe illness. People with immune disorders can become seriously ill. Measles can cause miscarriage or premature delivery in pregnant women who have never had the disease and become infected.

Who Gets It and How?

Measles is very contagious. It is spread by contact with respiratory discharges from the nose or mouth and from saliva. It is transmitted by coughing, sneezing, sharing eating utensils and mouthed toys. It is transmitted by hands and other surfaces contaminated by the virus. It is contagious from one to two days before until four days after the start of the rash. Illness begins about one to two weeks after exposure.

When Should People with this Illness Be Excluded?

A person with measles should stay home until four days after the rash appears and until feeling well enough to participate in regular daily activities again.

Where Should I Report It?

- Licensing requires that child care providers report cases of measles to their local health department and to Licensing.
- Notify all parents/guardians and program staff of cases of measles. It is important that parents monitor their children for any symptoms. Keep the identity of the infected child(ren) confidential.

How Can I Limit the Spread of Measles?

Measles is vaccine preventable. Measles vaccine is usually administered as part of the MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, and rubella). Immunization of all children at 12 to 15 months, with a booster at ages four to six years, is required by state immunization law for school and child care.

- Staff who have never had measles or been immunized for it should consult their health care provider. Adults born after 1957 may need a measles booster.
- Keep the ill child away from the child care program and away from pregnant women, infants and from people with immune problems.
- Always use the same precautions to prevent the spread of respiratory disease, including hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting the environment, and not sharing mouthed toys and eating utensils. There should be no kissing on the lips with the infected person.
- Review immunization records to ensure that children are up to date with recommended immunizations.