



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Facts about Measles

Symptoms		
Fever	Red eyes and sensitive to light.	White spots on the gums (day 2 and 3).
Irritability	Tiredness, lack of energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rash (day 3 or 4).• Starting on the hairline, face and behind the ears.• Then spreading down the body.• The rash isn't itchy.
Cold like symptoms - runny nose, sneeze and watery eyes.	Dry 'croupy' cough	

Measles is a highly infectious illness caused by a virus. Most people recover from measles but complications resulting from measles are more likely to develop in certain children, including:

- children with a weakened immune system, such as those with leukaemia.
- children under the age of five.
- children with a poor diet.

Complications are also more likely to develop in adults who are over the age of 20.

Common complications	Less common complications	Rare complications
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diarrhoea• Ear infection• Eye infection• Febrile convulsion• Laryngitis• Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bronchitis• Encephalitis• Hepatitis• Meningitis• Pneumonia• Squint (caused by damage to the eye muscles and nerves)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serious eye infection leading to damage of the optic nerve Heart and nervous system damage.• Serious brain complication known as subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE), which can sometimes occur several years after measles – however, although the condition is fatal, it is very rare, occurring in only 1 in every 100,000 cases of measles.

Measles can affect anyone who hasn't developed immunity – either by being in contact with the illness or by being vaccinated.

Babies are vulnerable but can have immunity passed on to them through their mother's antibodies (if she has immunity) ante-natally, which persists until approximately 6 months of age.

How is it spread? - Measles is VERY infectious!

You catch it by being in close contact with someone who already has the infection.

The virus is passed on in secretions from the infected person's nose and throat and spread through coughing and sneezing. However, it is possible to catch measles by direct contact with articles that have been contaminated by the infected secretions (e.g. tissues, or when someone with measles touches items or surfaces without washing their hands and someone else then touches the same surface and rubs their mouth or nose).

Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent most infections including measles.

Stay away from school/work?

Measles can be passed on just before the fever and cold like symptoms start and until **4 days after** the rash appears.

Public Health recommends isolating measles patients **for 4 days after** their rash begins.

So people with measles should **stay away from school or work for at least 4 days after** the symptoms first develop.

Measles and Pregnancy

If you are pregnant and have been in contact with someone with measles - always discuss this with your GP/Midwife immediately so you can be assessed and advised appropriately. If you have immunity (through previous vaccination or infection) you are much less likely to develop problems and require treatment. Measles can be passed onto the unborn baby.

If you are planning to become pregnant now or in the future, two doses of MMR vaccine should be offered pre-conceptually if you are unimmunised or not fully-immunised.

Vaccination

Are your children properly immunised?

The MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine is the safe and best way to prevent measles. The MMR vaccine is routinely be given when children are 12 months old, and a second dose is given when they are 3 years and 4 months old.

Are you properly immunised?

It has become evident lately that adults remain susceptible to these three diseases, therefore appropriate immunisation is recommended to individuals up to 40 years of age.

