

MEASLES

Report this disease immediately

Measles (also called rubeola, red measles, or hard measles) is a serious illness that may be prevented by vaccination. Currently, measles most often occurs in susceptible persons (those who have never had measles or measles vaccine) who are traveling into and out of the United States. Once measles cases occur, there may be spread to persons or groups of people who have not been vaccinated.

CAUSE

Measles virus

SYMPTOMS

The first symptoms seem like the beginning of a cold with a high fever, watery eyes, runny nose, and cough. A red blotchy rash appears on the third to seventh day, usually beginning on the face (hairline), spreading down the trunk and down the arms and legs. The fever may still be present after the rash starts. The rash usually lasts 4 to 7 days. Measles is sometimes complicated by diarrhea, ear infection or pneumonia. About one child in every 1000 who gets measles will develop encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Encephalitis can lead to seizures, deafness, or mental retardation.

SPREAD

When a person with measles coughs, sneezes, or breathes out tiny droplets with measles virus into the air and another person breathes them in. The virus can sometimes float in the air and infect others for approximately two hours after a person with measles leaves a room. Also by handling or touching contaminated objects and then touching your eyes, nose, and/or mouth.

INCUBATION (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)

7 to 18 (usually 8 to 12) days until cold-like symptoms begin
14 to 21 (usually 14) days until the rash begins

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

From 4 days before to 4 days after the rash starts. **Measles is highly contagious.**

EXCLUSION

Child care and School: Until 4 days after the rash appears. A child with measles should not attend any activities from 4 days before to 4 days after rash appearance. Exclude unvaccinated children and staff, who are not vaccinated within 72 hours of exposure, for at least 2 weeks after the onset of rash in the last person who developed measles.

DIAGNOSIS

A rash may occur with many viral illnesses. If measles is suspected, a blood test for measles antibody should be done 3 to 5 days after rash begins. Persons who have been exposed to measles should contact their healthcare provider if they develop cold-like symptoms with a fever and/or rash. They should **NOT go to any healthcare facility without calling first. The child will be kept separate from others to prevent further spread.**

TREATMENT

Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- The best way to prevent Measles is vaccination. Measles vaccine is combined with mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) with the first dose at age 12-15 months and the second at age 4-6 years. Two doses or a personal belief exemption are required for kindergarten and seventh grade enrollment.
- Unvaccinated people who have been exposed to measles virus should call their healthcare provider or local public health clinic as soon as possible to be vaccinated.
- If measles vaccine is given within 72 hours of exposure, it may provide some protection. Encourage parents/guardians to notify the child care provider or school when their child is vaccinated so their records can be updated. Immune globulin (IG), if given within 6 days of exposure, can prevent or make the symptoms of measles milder. This should be strongly considered for contacts younger than one year of age, pregnant women who have never had measles or measles vaccine, or persons with a weakened immune system.
- Recommend staff stay home if they develop symptoms of measles. Encourage parents/guardians to keep their child home if they develop symptoms of measles.
- Teach children and staff not to touch their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve. Dispose of used tissues.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after touching secretions from the nose or mouth.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/measles/>