



Measles Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is measles?** Measles is caused by a virus and spreads very easily when an infected person breathes, coughs, or sneezes. It spreads so easily that someone who is not protected (either by being immunized or having had measles in the past) can get it if he or she walks into a room where someone with the disease has been in the past couple of hours.
- 2. How serious is measles?** Measles can be serious in all age groups. However, children younger than 5 years of age and adults older than 20 years of age are more likely to suffer from measles complications. Some people may suffer from severe complications, such as pneumonia (infection of the lungs) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). About one out of 10 children with measles also gets an ear infection, and up to one out of 20 gets pneumonia. About one child out of every 1,000 who get measles will develop encephalitis (swelling of the brain) that can lead to convulsions and can leave the child deaf or with intellectual disability. One or two out of 1,000 die from measles complications. Measles can also cause pregnant woman to give birth prematurely.
- 3. What are the symptoms of measles?** Measles causes high fever, runny nose, cough, red, watery eyes, and a rash all over the body. People can spread measles before they show symptoms.
- 4. How soon do symptoms appear?** The symptoms of measles generally appear about seven to 14 days after a person is infected.
- 5. What does measles look like?** The measles rash usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face at the hairline and spread downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. Small raised bumps may also appear on top of the flat red spots. The spots may become joined together as they spread from the head to the rest of the body.
- 6. How is measles treated?** There is no specific treatment for measles.
- 7. How can I protect myself and family from measles?** MMR vaccine is the best protection against measles. Review your own and your family's vaccine records for MMR and make sure all other immunizations are up to date.
- 8. What if someone in my family may have measles or was exposed to someone with measles?** Call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away. Before you go to the doctor's office, call to tell them that you or your family member might have measles. This will allow them to take steps to avoid exposing other people. Try to stay away from other people until at least four days after the rash starts or a test proves it's not measles.
- 9. What is the measles vaccine?** The most common vaccine for measles is MMR, which protects against measles, mumps, and rubella.
- 10. Who needs the measles vaccine (MMR)?** Kids need two doses of MMR – the first dose at age 12-15 months and the second at 4-6 years of age. If an adult has not received the MMR vaccine or had measles in the past, they should get vaccinated.
- 11. Should pregnant women get the measles vaccine (MMR)?** Pregnant women should not get the MMR vaccine. Pregnant women who need the vaccine should wait until after giving birth. If you are susceptible to measles, mumps, or rubella, you can get MMR vaccine before hospital discharge. Breast feeding does not interfere with the response to MMR vaccine, and your baby will not be affected by the vaccine through your breast milk. Women should avoid getting pregnant for four weeks after getting the MMR vaccine.