

MEASLES FACTSHEET

What is Measles?

Measles is an infectious viral disease occurring most often in late winter and spring.

What are the symptoms of Measles?

Symptoms begin with fever lasting a couple of days, followed by cough, runny nose and conjunctivitis (pink eye). A rash is then seen, starting on the face and upper neck, spreading down the back and trunk, then extending to the arms and hands, as well as the legs and feet. After about 5 days, the rash fades in the same order in which it appeared.

How is Measles treated?

There is no specific treatment for the virus, though medications are available to decrease the severity of some symptoms.

Is a person with Measles contagious?

Measles is highly contagious. Infected people are usually contagious starting about 4 days before their rash appears to 4 days afterwards. Approximately 90% of non-immune individuals exposed to an infected person will become infected.

How is Measles spread?

The measles virus is present in the mucus in the nose and throat of infected people. When sneezing or coughing, droplets containing the virus are sprayed into the air and can remain active and contagious in the air or on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Appearance of symptoms can range from 7 – 21 days after exposure to a person infected with Measles, though it is most common to become ill 14 days after exposure.

Who can get Measles?

Anyone who is not immune to Measles can become infected. People are considered immune if they have

previously had the disease or had a full course of the MMR vaccination. Individuals born in 1956 or before are considered immune, as they lived through several widespread measles epidemics.

Can Measles be prevented?

Yes! Measles can be prevented by ensuring that you are immune. This can be done by getting vaccinated.

Who should get the vaccine?

Anyone who has not had the disease and cannot confirm their immunity should get vaccinated. Individuals born before 1957 are considered immune, and do not need the vaccine. People vaccinated in between 1963 - 1967 may have received an ineffective form of the vaccine, and should consult with their healthcare provider. If you do not know you have been vaccinated, and cannot confirm your vaccination record, you should get vaccinated. Measles vaccinations are not given to children before the age of 12 months, but are recommended at ages 12 – 15 months and again between the ages of 4 – 6, prior to entering school. If you have certain health conditions, you should not receive the vaccination, so please consult with your health care provider.

Is it true that the vaccine can cause autism?

No. Current medical research demonstrates that Measles vaccination is safe and effective.

Should a person with Measles be excluded from work or school?

A person diagnosed with measles should remain home for 5 days after the rash first appeared.

Where can I get more information?

Information about Measles and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.doh.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9371.

