

# MEASLES FACT SHEET

## What is measles?

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

## 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 the recommended number of doses of the measles vaccine.

## 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, and legs and feet. After about 5 days, the rash fades in the same order in which it appeared. If you think you may have measles, call your health care provider **before** your visit to tell them about your symptoms.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

Appearance of symptoms can range from 7–21 days after exposure to a person infected with measles. The rash usually appears about 14 days after exposure.

## Is a person with measles contagious?

Yes, measles is highly contagious. About 90% of the people who are not immune and are exposed to an infected person will become infected. Infected people are usually contagious starting about 4 days before their rash appears to 4 days afterwards.

## How is measles spread?

The virus is present in the mucus in the nose and throat of infected people. It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. The virus can also live for up to two hours in the air where the infected person coughed or sneezed, even after they leave the area. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the infected

surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected. Spread of measles is particularly common in certain settings, such as households, daycares, and schools.

## Is there a vaccine for measles?

Yes! The measles vaccine has been combined with the mumps and rubella vaccine into a single vaccine known as the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. The MMR vaccine provides protection against all three diseases.

## Who should get the vaccine?

Consult with your health care provider to determine if you should receive the vaccine. Some of the factors that can affect whether or not the vaccine is recommended include your age, occupation, travel plans, and health conditions. Measles remains a common disease in many parts of the world, and some U.S. travelers have become sick with measles after traveling abroad. Before you travel, consult with a healthcare provider to make sure you and your family are protected.

## How is measles treated?

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

## Should a person with measles be excluded from work or school?

Yes. A person with measles should remain home for 4 days after the rash first appears.

## Where can I get more information?

Information about measles and other related health topics can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://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](http://www.doh.dc.gov) or call (202) 442-9371.