

MEASLES CAUSE SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

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Annotation

Measles is a childhood infection caused by a virus. Once quite common, measles can now almost always be prevented with a vaccine. Also called rubeola, measles spreads easily and can be serious and even fatal for small children. While death rates have been falling worldwide as more children receive the measles vaccine, the disease still kills more than 200,000 people a year, mostly children.

Keywords: measles, coughs, sneezes, unvaccinated, diarrhea and vomiting, bronchitis, laryngitis, pneumonia, encephalitis

Measles is a highly contagious illness (an extremely contagious virus called morbillivirus causes measles). This means it's very easily spread to others. Measles is caused by a virus found in the nose and throat of an infected child or adult. When someone with measles coughs, sneezes or talks, infectious droplets spray into the air, where other people can breathe them in. The infectious droplets can hang in the air for about an hour. The infectious droplets may also land on a surface, where they can live and spread for several hours. You can get the measles virus by putting your fingers in your mouth or nose or rubbing your eyes after touching the infected surface. Risk factors for measles include:

Being unvaccinated. If you haven't had the measles vaccine, you're much more likely to get measles.

Traveling internationally. If you travel to countries where measles is more common, you're at higher risk of catching measles.

Having a vitamin A deficiency. If you don't have enough vitamin A in your diet, you're more likely to have more-severe symptoms and complications of measles.

Complications of measles may include:

Diarrhea and vomiting. Diarrhea and vomiting can result in losing too much water from the body (dehydration).

Ear infection. One of the most common complications of measles is a bacterial ear infection.

Bronchitis, laryngitis or croup. Measles may lead to irritation and swelling (inflammation) of the airways (croup). It can also lead to inflammation of the inner



walls that line the main air passageways of the lungs (bronchitis). Measles can also cause inflammation of the voice box (laryngitis).

Pneumonia. Measles can commonly cause an infection in the lungs (pneumonia). People with weakened immune systems can develop an especially dangerous type of pneumonia that sometimes can lead to death.

Encephalitis. About 1 in 1,000 people with measles can develop a complication called encephalitis. Encephalitis is irritation and swelling (inflammation) of the brain. The condition can be especially dangerous for people with weakened immune systems. Encephalitis may occur right after measles, or it might not occur until months later. Encephalitis can cause permanent brain damage.

Pregnancy problems. If you're pregnant, you need to take special care to avoid measles because the disease can cause premature birth, low birth weight and fetal death.

Symptoms: measles signs and symptoms appear around 10 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Signs and symptoms of measles typically include: fever, dry cough, runny nose, sore throat, inflamed eyes (conjunctivitis). Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers on a red background found inside the mouth on the inner lining of the cheek — also called Koplik's spots, a skin rash made up of large, flat blotches that often flow into one another. The infection occurs in stages over 2 to 3 weeks.

Infection and incubation. For the first 10 to 14 days after infection, the measles virus spreads in the body. There are no signs or symptoms of measles during this time.

Nonspecific signs and symptoms. Measles typically begins with a mild to moderate fever, often with a persistent cough, a runny nose, inflamed eyes (conjunctivitis) and a sore throat. This relatively mild illness may last 2 to 3 days.

Acute illness and rash. The rash is made up of small red spots, some of which are slightly raised. Spots and bumps in tight clusters give the skin a splotchy red appearance. The face breaks out first. Over the next few days, the rash spreads down the arms, chest and back, then over the thighs, lower legs and feet. At the same time, the fever rises sharply, often as high as 104 to 105.8 F (40 to 41 C).

Recovery. The measles rash may last about seven days. The rash gradually fades first from the face and last from the thighs and feet. As other symptoms of the illness go away, the cough and darkening or peeling of the skin where the rash was may stay for about 10 days.

Management and Treatment

There's no cure for measles. The virus must run its course, which usually takes about 10 to 14 days. You can manage your symptoms by: taking acetaminophen or NSAIDs for aches, pains or fever.



Getting plenty of rest.

Drinking lots of fluids.

Gargling with salt water.

Avoiding harsh light if your eyes hurt.

You should stay home from work or keep your child home from school to prevent spreading measles to others. You're usually able to return to your normal activities after you've had the rash for four days. People in your household who aren't vaccinated are at risk of getting measles and should stay away from the infected person.

Note: Never give aspirin to children or teenagers unless your healthcare provider specifically tells you to because of the risk of Reye's syndrome.

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