

Fact Sheet: Measles

What is Measles?

Measles is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. The disease of measles and the virus that causes it share the same name. The disease is also called rubeola. Measles virus normally grows in the cells that line the back of the throat and lungs. Measles can cause such complications as pneumonia and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Measles can also cause miscarriages in pregnant women. A vaccine is available.

Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of measles generally begin about seven to fourteen days after a person is infected, and include:

- Blotchy rash
- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Feeling run down, achy
- Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth

Three to five days after the start of symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears. The rash usually begins on a person's face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, chest, arms, legs, and feet.

How is it spread?

The virus lives in the mucus in the nose and throat of the infected person. When that person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray into the air. The droplets can get into other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouth or nose after touching an infected surface. The virus spreads so easily that people who are not immune will likely get it when they come close to someone who is infected.

Treatment

- There is no specific medicine to cure measles.
- If you or your child develops symptoms, consult your health care provider for the diagnostic testing that is necessary to prove the illness is measles.
- Rest, plenty of fluids, and a non-aspirin product (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) can be used to reduce fever and discomfort.

Prevention

- The best way to prevent measles is to be vaccinated against it. Two MMR injections are needed to be completely immunized.
- Adults who do not know if they are protected against measles should ask their doctor or clinic about the MMR vaccine.
- All women of childbearing age should avoid anyone with measles.

This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care professional. For more information about communicable disease, speak to your health care provider or call the Ingham County Health Department at (517)-887-4308.

Visit our website at <http://hd.ingham.org>

or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.cdc.gov
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