



**Measles Fact Sheet**  
**(rubeola, red or hard measles)**

**What is measles?**

Measles is a highly contagious rash illness caused by a virus of the genus *Morbillivirus* in the *Paramyxovirus* family. Complications from measles such as ear infections, pneumonia, croup, encephalitis, seizures, and death can occur.

**How do you get it?**

Anyone who has not had measles previously or who has not received the vaccine can get measles. Direct exposure to secretions from the nose or throat of a person with the disease can cause measles. Transmission occurs when a person with measles coughs or sneezes and airborne droplets are in the air for another person to breathe. Airborne transmission can occur for up to 2 hours after a person with measles has been in a closed area. It spreads rapidly and easily.

**What are the symptoms of measles?**

The symptoms usually occur in 2 stages. The first stage commonly begins with a runny nose, red watery eyes, fever, and cough. A red blotchy rash appears in the second stage, starting on the face and spreading down the body to the arms and legs and usually lasts for about 4-6 days.

**When do symptoms start?**

The fever, runny nose, and cough usually appear 10 days after exposure, but can appear as late as 18 days after exposure. The rash appears 3 to 7 days after the onset of the first symptoms.

**When and for how long is a person able to spread measles?**

Infected people can spread measles to others from four days before through four days after the rash appears.

**What is the treatment for measles?**

There is no specific treatment for measles. Rest and symptomatic treatment is best for uncomplicated cases.

**Should a person with measles be excluded from work or school?** Yes, for 4 days after the onset of the rash.

**If you get measles once, can you get it again?**

No. Adults born before 1957 are usually immune because they had measles as a child.

**How can you keep from getting it?**

Measles vaccine (in the form of MMR or MR or measles only vaccines) can prevent measles.