

**FACT SHEET****MEASLES****What is measles?**

Measles is an acute, highly communicable viral disease. Measles is not considered endemic (constantly present) in the United States, but outbreaks and isolated cases from travelers occur each year in the United States.

**How is measles spread?**

Measles is spread through the air by droplets from the nose, throat, and mouth of an infected person. A person may breathe in the droplets or touch a surface contaminated with the droplets. An infected person is able to spread measles from 4 days before the rash starts through 4 days after the rash appears.

**What are the symptoms of measles?**

Measles symptoms usually appear 7 to 14 days after infection. The initial symptoms typically include a high fever, cough, runny nose, watery eyes, and potentially Koplik spots (tiny white spots in the mouth). The rash usually begins three to five days after initial symptoms begin and appears as flat red spots on the face at the hairline and behind the ears. The rash spreads downward to the chest and back and finally, to the thighs and feet.

**How soon do symptoms of measles appear?**

The average incubation period for measles from exposure to initial symptoms (fever, cough, watery eyes, runny nose) is about 10-12 days. Symptom onset ranges 7-21 days after exposure.

**Who is at risk of getting measles?**

Anyone, regardless of age, who is exposed to measles and is not immune.

**How do you know if you have immunity to measles?**

Presumptive evidence of immunity includes age-appropriate vaccination with a measles-containing vaccine, laboratory confirmation of measles infection, laboratory confirmation of immunity or you were born before 1957.

**How is measles diagnosed?**

A healthcare provider will suspect measles based on the symptoms, especially if the patient has recently traveled internationally or was exposed to someone with a fever and a rash. Laboratory tests (from a throat or nose swab or a urine specimen) can confirm the diagnosis.

**What should you do if you think you may be infected?**

Call your healthcare provider and discuss your symptoms and any possible exposure before showing up at the clinic. The healthcare provider will advise you to either come to the clinic or arrange for you to be seen at a different location so other people are not exposed.

**How is measles treated?**

There is no specific treatment for measles. Complications should be managed by a healthcare provider.

### **Should people who have been around a person infected with measles be treated?**

People who are at risk of developing measles (people who have not had measles or been adequately immunized) may benefit from post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). There are two forms of PEP that may be administered. Vaccine given within 72 hours of initial exposure may potentially prevent or modify the clinical course of disease. Immune globulin given within 6 days of initial exposure may modify the clinical course of disease.

### **Can a person get measles again?**

No. Immunity after illness is permanent.

### **Who should receive measles vaccine?**

All children, adolescents, and adults born in 1957 or later without a valid contraindication should have documentation of vaccination or other evidence of immunity. Additionally, some healthcare personnel who were born before 1957 may also need proof of vaccination or other evidence of immunity.

### **Where can additional information regarding measles be found?**

- Iowa Department of Health and Human Services [Disease Information | Health & Human Services](#)
- State Hygienic Laboratory (SHL) [www.shl.uiowa.edu](http://www.shl.uiowa.edu)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Measles \(Rubeola\) | CDC](#)