

Measles (Rubeola)

Information Sheet for General Public

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious acute viral illness that is caused by measles virus. It is spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. This disease is preventable by measles containing vaccines.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles typically begins with:

- High fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (also known as conjunctivitis)

2-3 days after symptoms begin; tiny white spots (also known as Koplik spots) may appear inside the mouth. See figure 1.

Figure 1.



Images retrieved from <http://phil.cdc.gov/phil/home.asp>

3-5 days after symptoms begin a rash breaks out. It usually begins as flat red spots (see figure 2.) that appear on the face/hairline and spread downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. Small raised bumps may also appear on top of the flat red spots. The spots may become joined together as they spread from the head to the rest of the body. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104° Fahrenheit.

Other symptoms include diarrhea and generalized swelling of the lymph nodes.

Figure 2.



Images retrieved from <http://phil.cdc.gov/phil/home.asp>

Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology

350 Capitol St, Room 125, Charleston WV 25301-3715
Phone: 304.558.5358, extension 1 • Fax: 304.558.8736 • <http://www.dide.wv.gov>

Measles (Rubeola)

Information Sheet for General Public

How does measles virus spread?

It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. Also, measles virus can live for up to two hours on a surface or in an airspace where the infected person coughed or sneezed. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the infected surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected.

How long does it take to show signs of measles after being exposed?

It takes an average of 8-12 days from exposure to the first symptom, which is usually fever. The measles rash does not usually appear until approximately 14 days after exposure.

How long can a person with measles be contagious to others?

Infected people can spread measles to others from four days before to four days after the rash appears. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, more than 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.

How serious is measles?

Measles can be serious for all age groups. However, children younger than 5 years and adults older than 20 years are more likely to suffer from measles complications.

What are possible complications from measles?

Some common measles complications include ear infections and diarrhea. Severe complications of measles include pneumonia (infection of the lungs), encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and even death.

Measles may cause pregnant woman to give birth prematurely, or have a low-birth-weight baby.

For more information, please visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov

Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology

350 Capitol St, Room 125, Charleston WV 25301-3715

Phone: 304.558.5358, extension 1 • Fax: 304.558.8736 • <http://www.dide.wv.gov>

Measles (Rubeola)

Information Sheet for General Public

What do I do if I or my child is exposed to a person with measles or diagnosed with measles?

If you or your child was exposed to someone with measles, contact your healthcare provider or your health department immediately to determine if you are immune to measles. Although there is no treatment for measles steps can be taken to prevent you from becoming ill if you are exposed.

If you suspect that you or your child may have measles, IMMEDIATELY notify your healthcare provider **BEFORE** you go to the facility. Although there is no treatment for measles, steps can be taken to prevent you from becoming ill if you are exposed.

If you or your child is diagnosed with measles you should stay home and avoid contact with people until 4 days after the rash appeared.

Please remember you and your healthcare provider must notify your health department immediately if you are diagnosed with measles.

How is measles diagnosed?

Measles is diagnosed by a combination of the patient's symptoms and laboratory testing.

Is there a treatment for measles?

There is no treatment for measles.

Can measles be prevented?

There are vaccines to prevent measles infection. The measles vaccine is found in MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine and MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox) vaccine).

Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology

350 Capitol St, Room 125, Charleston WV 25301-3715
Phone: 304.558.5358, extension 1 • Fax: 304.558.8736 • <http://www.dide.wv.gov>