

Measles

What is measles?

Measles is a severe illness caused by a virus. It spreads easily and is very contagious.

What happens when you have measles?

Symptoms of measles including a high fever, cold-like symptoms, pink eye, and a bad cough start 7-21 days after being infected. Koplik spots (tiny blue-white spots inside the mouth and throat) can also appear but may not always be present. This is followed by a red, blotchy rash on the face that spreads down the body. There can also be severe complications from having measles.

Those who are most at risk of severe complications are:

- non-immune children under 5
- non-immune adults over 20
- pregnant women
- people who are immunocompromised

Symptoms of measles:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Body aches
- Rash
- Diarrhea
- Red eyes
- Feeling irritable or unwell

Complications of measles:

- Severe bronchitis, ear infections, and diarrhea
- Pneumonia (1 in 10 cases)
- Seizures
- Swelling of the brain (1 in 1000 cases – of these cases 15% die and 25% have permanent brain damage)
- Death (1-2 in 1000 cases)

How does measles spread?

Someone with measles can spread it when they cough, sneeze, or talk. A person with measles is contagious for four days before, and four days after their rash starts. Measles is very contagious, you can catch it just by being in the same room as someone who has it, and it can remain in the air for two hours after the person leaves. Nine out of ten people who are not immune to measles will catch it if they are exposed to it.

How do you protect yourself from measles?

Immunization is the best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community! A vaccine for measles is available in combination with mumps and rubella and is part of the routine childhood immunization series.

What do you do if you think you have measles?

If you or your child develop symptoms of measles, isolate at home, and call a health care provider immediately.

For more information

[Don't Wait, Vaccinate! Measles Fact Sheet \(sac-isc.gc.ca\)](#)

[Measles: Symptoms and treatment - Canada.ca](#)



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