

What is measles?

Measles (also called red measles or rubeola) is an infection caused the measles virus. It can cause severe complications in children and adults, in some cases leading to swelling of the brain, pneumonia and other respiratory complications, even death. Measles may cause pregnant women who have not had the MMR vaccine to give birth prematurely or have a low-birth-weight baby.



What are the symptoms of measles?

Symptoms of measles may appear up to 21 days after being exposed to an infected person or breathing in infected air. Symptoms can include a *fever, runny nose, cough, drowsiness, irritability, and red eyes*. A red rash appears on the face 3 to 7 days after the start of the above symptoms. The rash then progresses down the body. If you develop these symptoms, isolate yourself and contact your health care provider.

How is it spread?

Measles is very contagious and spreads from person to person by drops of fluid from the nose and throat of someone who has the disease (e.g., coughing or sneezing). The infected person spreads the disease the most from 4 days before to 4 days after the start of the rash.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Treatments are given to help relieve the symptoms of measles (e.g., pain relievers to reduce fever). Severe measles infections are often treated in hospitals. Most people can recover at home by drinking plenty of fluids, eating healthy foods, and getting lots of rest. A person who has measles is advised to stay home, and not to attend daycare, school, or work, since measles is very contagious.

Who is at risk for measles?

Infants under 12 months of age, children, pregnant women, and those with a weakened immune system who have not been vaccinated against measles are at greater risk of measles and its complications. Individuals born in or after 1970 and have not received the two doses of the measles vaccine (MMR or MMRV vaccine) are also at risk, along with those who have not had a confirmed case of measles, those who have traveled to areas where there is a measles outbreak, and those who have had contact with a confirmed case of measles.

How can measles be prevented?

The best way to protect against measles is for all individuals to receive two doses of the measles vaccine (MMR or MMRV vaccine). This vaccine is safe and free for people who live, work, and attend school in Ontario. You can get the vaccine from your health care provider. Besides vaccines, there are other important actions you can take to protect yourself and others:

- Cover your coughs and sneeze with a tissue
- Wash your hands often
- Keep your distance when travelling or attending large group events
- Stay home when you are sick

What should I do if I think I have measles?

If you or a family member are showing signs and symptoms of measles, it is important to:

- Isolate immediately by staying home and avoiding contact with others.
- Call before visiting a clinic or hospital so they can prepare for your arrival and prevent virus spread.
- Wear a well-fitting, high quality mask when seeking medical assessment.

Your health care provider will assess you for measles and will test you if they suspect you have measles.

