

# MEASLES | Frequently Asked Questions

## What is Measles?

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. It can result in serious health complications, such as pneumonia, swelling of the brain, and even death.

## What are the signs & symptoms of Measles?

Symptoms usually appear about 7 to 14 days after a person is infected.

Measles typically begins with:

- High fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes

After four days, a raised, red rash starts to spread on the face, down the body and out to the arms and legs. The rash usually lasts four to seven days.

## How is Measles transmitted?

It is spread by sneezing or coughing, touching contaminated objects, and direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions. Infected droplets and secretions can remain contagious on surfaces for up to two hours.

An individual with measles can spread the virus to others for four days before and four days after the rash begins.

## Should I go to the doctor if I think I have Measles?

If you have signs & symptoms of measles, please contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH before you leave your residence.

## How can I protect myself against Measles?

Measles can be prevented with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. The CDC recommends all children get two doses of MRR vaccine – 1<sup>st</sup> dose at 12 to 15 months and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose at 4 to 6 years old.

Adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get at least one dose of MMR vaccine. Vaccination is also recommended for students at post-high school educational institutions, international travelers, and healthcare personnel.

## Where can I get vaccinated for Measles?

You can receive a vaccination from your family doctor. If you do not have a family doctor, please contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH for more information.

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## How effective is MMR vaccine?

More than 95% of the people who receive a single dose of MMR will develop immunity to all three viruses. A second vaccine dose gives immunity to almost all people who did not respond to the first dose.

## What is the most common reaction following MMR vaccine?

Most people have no reaction. However, 5-10 percent of the people receiving the MMR vaccine experience a low-grade fever and a mild rash.

## Do vaccines cause autism spectrum disorder (ASD)?

Many studies have looked at whether there is a relationship between vaccines and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). To date, the studies continue to show that vaccines are not associated with autism, according to the CDC.

## Who should not get a MMR vaccine or should wait?

Some people should not get MMR vaccine or should wait:

- Anyone who has had a life-threatening allergic reaction to the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of MMR vaccine
- Anyone who has had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of MMR vaccine
- Some people who are sick at the time the shot is scheduled may be advised to wait
- Pregnant women should not get MMR vaccine. Pregnant women who need the vaccine should wait until after giving birth.
- Tell your doctor if the person getting the vaccine:
  - Has HIV/AIDS, or another disease that affects the immune system
  - Is being treated with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids
  - Has any kind of cancer
  - Is being treated for cancer with radiation or drugs
  - Has ever had a low platelet count (a blood disorder)
  - Has gotten another vaccine within the past 4 weeks
  - Has recently had a transfusion or received other blood products

## How is Measles treated?

There is no prescription medicine to treat measles. Vaccination is the best protection. However, some measures can be taken to protect non-vaccinated people against the virus.

Live measles vaccine may prevent disease if given within 72 hours of exposure. Immune Globulin (IG) may prevent or modify disease and provide temporary protection if given within six days of exposure. Doctors may also prescribe medications to treat symptoms associated with measles.