

Kent County Health Department
Measles Fact Sheet



What is Measles?

Measles is a serious respiratory disease (in the lungs and breathing tubes) that causes a rash and fever. It is very contagious. In rare cases, it can be deadly.

Who gets the Measles?

Measles affect children and adults. The ongoing measles outbreak that started in California has mostly affected adults who were not immune to the disease, either because they were never vaccinated or only received a single dose of the vaccination before two doses became the standard. Receiving the vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) today could go a long way in protecting against the virus that causes skin rash, fever, coughing and, in extreme cases, permanent hearing loss or brain damage.

How are the Measles spread?

Measles spreads when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles starts with a fever that can get very high. Some of the other symptoms that may occur are:

- Cough, runny nose, & red eyes
- Rash of tiny, red spots that start at the head & spread to the rest of the body
- Diarrhea
- Ear infection

How soon do infected people get sick?

The symptoms of measles generally appear about seven to 14 days after a person is infected. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik spots) may appear inside the mouth.

Three to five days after symptoms begin, a rash breaks out. It usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face at the 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.

Can Measles be spread from person to person?

Yes, measles is a disease of humans. Measles virus is not spread by any other animal species. Measles are spread through the air through coughing and sneezing. Infected people can spread measles to others from four days before to four days after the rash appears

How is Measles treated?

Treatment of measles is essentially supportive care with maintenance of good hydration and replacement of fluids lost through diarrhea or emesis. Intravenous (IV) rehydration may be necessary if dehydration is severe.

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Should an infected person be excluded from school or work?

Any person who has symptoms of Measles should not go to day care, school or work. They should stay away from other people until the rash subsides or until a healthcare provider has determined it is not infectious. For any person with a diagnosed rash, they should be excluded from day care, school and work until 4 days after the rash onset.

How can Measles be prevented?

To prevent measles, children (and some adults) should be vaccinated with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Two doses of this vaccine are needed for complete protection.

Children should be given the first dose of MMR vaccine at 12 to 15 months of age. The second dose can be given 4 weeks later, but is usually given before the start of kindergarten at 4 to 6 years of age.

Why should my child get the MMR shot?

The MMR shot:

- Protects your child from measles, a potentially serious disease (and also protects against mumps and rubella)
- Prevents your child from getting an uncomfortable rash and high fever from measles
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child)

Visit our website at: http://www.accesskent.com/Health/health_department.htm

Or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: www.CDC.gov

Where can I learn more about the MMR shot and my child?

To learn more about the MMR shot, talk to your child's doctor, call 1-800-CDC-INFO, or visit the CDC Vaccines for Parents site: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/index.html>

Vaccinations are available at the Kent County Health Department and appointments can be made by calling 616-632-7200.

How many measles cases are there in the United States each year?

In 2000, the United States declared that measles was eliminated. Measles elimination means that the disease is not constantly present in this country. Since 2000, the annual number of people reported to have measles ranged from a low of 37 people in 2004 to a high of 644 people in 2014. Most of these people got measles outside of the United States or after being exposed to someone who got measles while in another country. So far in 2015, there have been many cases of measles that are part of a large, ongoing outbreak linked to an amusement park in California.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information call your health care provider or call the Kent County Health Department at 616.632.7100.