

Measles (Rubeola) Fact Sheet

What is measles?

Measles is a very contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. The disease of measles and the virus that causes it shares the same name. The disease is also called rubeola. Measles virus normally grows in the cells that line the back of the throat and lungs.

What are the symptoms of Measles?

A typical case of measles begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik's spots) may appear inside the mouth. Three to five days after the start of symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears. The rash usually begins on a person's face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you or your child has symptoms of measles, what should you do?

Stay at home and avoid having visitors. Call your doctor or clinic. Your doctor or clinic will tell you if you should come in for a visit.

How serious is measles?

Measles can lead to hospitalization and death.

Many people with measles have complications like diarrhea, ear infections, pneumonia, or acute encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain that can lead to convulsions, and can leave a child deaf or mentally retarded). Complications are more common in children under 5 years of age and adults older than 20.

Measles during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage or premature births.

1 out of every 20 children with measles gets pneumonia. For every 1,000 children who get measles – 1 child will develop encephalitis and 1 or 2 will die from measles complications.

Is there a treatment for measles?

No, there is no specific treatment beyond bed rest, fluids, and control of fever. There may be additional treatment if complications develop.

Are there health regulations to prevent measles?

Yes, the back of this sheet describes the Kansas regulations to prevent measles.

How is measles spread?

It is spread when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks and other people nearby inhale the virus. Touching tissues or sharing a cup used by someone who has measles can also spread it. Symptoms may appear 10-14 days after exposure.

When is a person with measles contagious?

People can spread measles starting 4 days before until 4 days after the rash begins.

Is there a vaccine for measles?

Yes. Measles vaccination is usually combined with mumps and rubella (MMR).

- Children should receive two doses of MMR vaccine: the first at 12 to 15 months of age and the second at 4 to 6 years of age. (During a measles outbreak, children may receive the second dose as soon as four weeks after the first dose, no matter how old they are.)
- All adults who have not had measles or a measles shot should receive MMR vaccine, particularly if they were born in 1957 or later.
- Certain adults (such as health care workers, international travelers, or adults attending post high school educational institutions) should receive two doses of measles/ MMR vaccine.

If you or your child has been exposed to measles, what should you do?

- Call your doctor or clinic right away. They will let you know if you need to come in for a visit.
- If you have not been vaccinated, getting an MMR shot within three days of being exposed may prevent measles.
- If you get a shot of immune globulin (a blood product with antibodies to the measles virus) within six days of being exposed to measles, it may prevent or lessen severity of measles.

How can you prevent measles?

- Protect your children by having them vaccinated.
- Protect yourself by making sure you have immunity to measles.
- If you are ill with a fever, stay home and avoid all public places except to see a medical provider.
- If you need to seek healthcare, call ahead so appropriate measures can be taken to protect other patients and staff.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation. If you have any questions about the disease described above or think that you may have an infection, consult with your healthcare provider.

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Kansas Regulations to Prevent Measles

- Every student enrolled or enrolling in a Kansas school must have proof of 2 doses of measles vaccine (MMR) (KAR 28-1-20).
- Persons exposed to a measles case who cannot readily provide documentation of measles immunity including those children with immunization exemptions, will be excluded from the school or childcare setting until 21 days after the onset of the last reported illness in the setting (KAR 28-1-6).
- If the person at risk for measles disease is immunized or shows proof of immunization within 24 hours of a case being reported, the exclusion will not be needed.
- Regulations also require that anyone who has measles be isolated until 4 days after the rash appears (KAR 28-1-6). That means they must be kept away from public places like daycare centers, school and work.

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html or call your local health department.