

Measles

Measles is a highly contagious virus that spreads easily through the air when an infected person coughs, or sneezes, or was close to someone who is infected for several minutes. It can be serious, especially for young children, pregnant people, those with weak immune systems and those who are not fully vaccinated (MMR Vaccine). One infected person can spread it to 9 out of 10 people around them who are not immune.

About 1-2 in 10 children with measles will need to be seen in the emergency department or even hospitalized because of complications like ear infections and pneumonia. Children can get very sick.

Measles can lead to serious complications such as pneumonia, ear infections, or brain swelling (encephalitis). Immunization is a safe and effective way to prevent measles and protect your community.



What to Expect

Measles symptoms usually begin 7 to 14 days after contact with the virus but can occur up to 21 days after contact. They usually occur in stages:

Early symptoms (Days 1-4)

- High fever (often over 38.5°C or 101.3°F)
- Cough
- Runny nose (coryza)
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Fatigue, poor appetite

Later symptoms (Days 3-7)

- Small white spots inside the mouth (Koplik spots)
- A red blotchy rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body

If visiting a clinic or hospital, call ahead so precautions can be taken to prevent spreading the virus to others.



Recommended Follow-Up

☐ Follow up in ___ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

☐ _____

☐ _____



When to Get Help

See a pharmacist, or call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for the hearing impaired) if:

- You have questions about the medications you or your child were prescribed during your visit.

Call your health care provider or 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for the hearing impaired) or go to a walk-in clinic, if you or your child:

- You have questions about which health service(s) you should seek care from for (new) symptoms.
- Have been in close to someone who has measles for 10 minutes
- Are pregnant and may have been exposed.
- Fever lasts 5 days or goes above 39.5°C or 103°F for more than 6 hours despite acetaminophen or ibuprofen (avoid aspirin).
- Develop ear pain (and/or pulling at ear).

Go to the nearest emergency department or call 9-1-1 if you or your child:

- Have trouble breathing, shortness of breath or rapid breathing.
- Develop barking cough or loud breathing sounds.
- Very sleepy, confused, or hard to wake up.
- Have a seizure.
- Develop severe headache and neck stiffness.
- Become dehydrated: dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes or peeing very small amounts or fewer wet diapers.

To Learn More:

- Call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing)
- HealthLinkBC. Understanding measles.
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-library/health-features/understanding-measles>
- HealthLinkBC. Common questions about measles.
https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/Common_questions_about_measles.pdf

- HealthLinkBC. Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine:
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/measles-mumps-rubella-mmr-vaccine>
- BC Centre for Disease Control. Measles:
<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/measles>



How to Care for Yourself at Home

If you or your child has measles:

- There is no specific anti-viral medication for measles.
- Stay home and away from others (isolate) until at least 4 days after the rash starts.
- Get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®) to reduce fever and discomfort.
- Do not give aspirin to children under 18 years old.
- Avoid visitors, especially babies, pregnant people, and those with weak immune systems.
- If visiting a clinic or hospital, call ahead so precautions can be taken to prevent spreading the virus to others.
- Vitamin A offers some benefit for some children with confirmed measles but **DOES NOT PREVENT** people from getting measles. In BC, it is only recommended in children who have measles who require hospitalization (sick!) and children with measles who have pre-existing immune compromising conditions even if they do not need to be admitted to hospital. High doses of vitamin A can cause people to get sick (e.g. with vomiting, diarrhea, and dizziness).

Preventing Measles

- The best protection is the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. It is safe and highly effective. **There is no association with autism spectrum disorder.**
- Children should get two doses: one at 12 – 15 months and second one at 4–6 years of age.



Measles - Discharge Instructions - continued

- Adults born after 1970 should ensure they have had 2 doses of MMR.
- If unsure about your vaccination status, talk to your health care provider or public health office.

REFERENCES

1. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Measles Resources**
Comprehensive information on measles symptoms, prevention, and vaccination.
<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/resources/index.html>
2. **CDC – Be Ready for Measles Toolkit**
Preparedness and outbreak response tools and communication materials.
<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/php/toolkit/index.html>
3. **American Medical Association – Measles Resources**
Information on treatment and prevention strategies for measles.
<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/measles-resources>
4. **American Academy of Pediatrics – Measles Resources**
Patient education handouts and vaccination information.
<https://publications.aap.org/patiented/resources/31554/Measles-Resources-from-Pediatric-Patient-Education>
5. **CDC – Introduction to Measles Slide Set**
Educational slides detailing measles symptoms and prevention.
<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/downloads/introtomeaslesslideset.pdf>
6. **CDC – Measles and the Importance of Childhood Vaccination**
Fact sheet highlighting the significance of MMR vaccination.
https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/resources/childhood-vaccination/CDC-Childhood-Vax-Disease-Factsheet-Measles_508.pdf
7. **American Academy of Pediatrics – Measles Frequently Asked Questions**
Answers to common questions about measles and its prevention.
<https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/measles/measles-frequently-asked-questions/>

Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/measles/

Additional Information

- Your pharmacy can assess and prescribe for several ailments. For more information see: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/accessing-health-care/pharmacy-services>

