



WHAT IS MEASLES?

Measles is a very contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. Before the measles vaccine became available, measles was a common childhood disease. Some people may suffer from severe complications, such as pneumonia (infection of the lungs) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). They may need to be hospitalized and could die. Symptoms include: rash, high fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET MEASLES?

Measles is easily spread from person to person. When an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes, the virus is released into the air and enters another person's body through the nose, mouth or throat. People can also become sick if they come in contact with the mucus or saliva (spit) from an infected person. The measles virus can live on contaminated surfaces and in the air for up to two hours. A person with measles may be contagious starting 4 days before through 4 days after they develop a rash.

ARE THERE COMPLICATIONS WITH A MEASLES VIRUS INFECTION?

Yes. Common complications include ear infections and diarrhea. Severe complications include pneumonia (infection of the lungs), encephalitis (swelling of the brain), and death. Measles may cause pregnant women to have babies born early (premature) or with low birth weight.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS PROTECTED AGAINST MEASLES?

[Your child is considered protected against measles](#) if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. School-age child (grades K-12): received two doses of measles vaccine
2. Pre-school aged child: received one dose of measles vaccine
3. Have laboratory confirmation of measles antibodies (IgG), or laboratory confirmation that they had measles at some point in their life.

WHERE CAN I GET A MEASLES VACCINE FOR MY CHILD?

Measles vaccine (MMR – measles, mumps, and rubella) is available from:

- Many doctor's offices
- Urgent Care Centers (call to confirm)
- Local pharmacies (check with locations based on child's age)
- [Federally funded health centers](#) (for under or uninsured individuals)
- Local health department (LHD) or Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) [state health center](#)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WITH MEASLES?

If you think your child has been exposed to measles, contact your health care provider immediately. If your child has not been vaccinated, measles vaccine may prevent the disease if given within 3 days after exposure. Immune globulin (IG) may prevent or modify disease and provide temporary protection if given within 6 days of exposure in persons who cannot have the vaccine.

IF MY CHILD IS EXPOSED, DOES THAT MEAN THEY WILL GET SICK OR INFECTED?

An exposure occurs when a person is in the same space (e.g., room, office, building) as someone who is infected, even if they already left. The virus can linger in the air for up to 2 hours. People are less likely to get sick with measles if they have received the MMR vaccine. Approximately 90 percent of people who aren't protected from measles will get measles when they are exposed to someone with the disease.



IF MY CHILD HAS MEASLES, WILL THEY HAVE TO STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL, CHILDCARE, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES?

Yes, if your child has been diagnosed with measles, they will need to stay home from school and other activities. Children without immunocompromising conditions will have to stay home for 4 days after the date the rash started (onset of rash is day zero). Children with immunocompromising conditions might have to stay home longer than 4 days because they might still be able to spread the virus to others. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis and will likely include conversations between the health department and medical provider.

DOES MY VACCINATED CHILD HAVE TO STAY HOME IF THEY ARE EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WITH MEASLES?

No, if your child has received measles vaccine, typically the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) or measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella (MMRV) vaccine, they do not need to stay home when they have been exposed to someone with measles. Contact your health care provider for recommendations if your school-aged child has only received one dose of vaccine.

DOES MY UNVACCINATED CHILD HAVE TO STAY HOME IF THEY ARE EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WITH MEASLES?

Yes, unvaccinated children who are exposed to someone with measles, including those who have a medical or other exemption to vaccination, must be excluded from school and other activities through 21 days after their most recent exposure. However, your child may return to school and other activities if they receive a dose of MMR vaccine within 72 hours after their initial exposure. A representative from the health department will provide you with information about when your child can return to school and other activities.

WHAT SYMPTOMS MIGHT MY CHILD DEVELOP IF THEY ARE EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WITH MEASLES?

For up to 21 days after your child is exposed, it is very important for you to watch your child for symptoms of measles, which include the following (usually in this order):

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis, known as “pink eye”)
- Rash that starts on the head and spreads all over the body

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS EXPOSED TO SOMEONE WITH MEASLES AND THEN DEVELOPS SYMPTOMS?

If your child begins experiencing symptoms of measles, call the Pennsylvania Department of Health at 877-PA-HEALTH (877-724-3258). If you need to seek medical attention for your child’s measles symptoms, please inform the clinic or hospital before you arrive that your child may have been exposed to measles. This will help the clinic or hospital take steps to prevent the spread of measles to others.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Measles Fact Sheet](#) | [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#) • [Measles \(Rubeola\)](#) | [Measles \(Rubeola\)](#) | [CDC](#)

WHAT IS CONSIDERED SCHOOL, CHILDCARE, AND OTHER ACTIVITIES?

These settings include, but are not limited to:

- youth camps
- childcare centers
- preschools
- schools
- institutions of higher education
- sports practices and games
- club meetings
- social activities
- public outings