



## MEASLES

### **What is measles?**

Measles is a highly contagious virus that causes an acute respiratory illness. If one person has measles, 9 to 10 people around him or her will also become infected unless they are vaccinated against measles.

### **Who gets measles?**

Measles can be serious in all age groups. However, several groups are more likely to suffer from measles complications, including children younger than 5 years of age, adults older than 20 years of age, pregnant women, and people with compromised immune systems, such as leukemia or HIV infection.

### **How is measles spread?**

Measles lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person. It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the infected surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they become infected.

### **What are the symptoms of measles?**

Seven to 14 days after measles infection, the first symptoms are high fever (as high as 105 degrees Fahrenheit), cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. Two to three days later, tiny white spots called kolpik 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 down the neck to the trunk, arms, legs, and feet. Immunocompromised patients may not develop the rash.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

Measles symptoms appear seven to 14 days after contact with the virus.

### **Should an infected person be excluded from work or school?**

Children with measles should be kept out of school for four days after appearance of the rash. More information about measles in childcare settings can be found in Delaware Division of Public Health's "[Managing Infectious Disease in Childcare Settings](#)." Anyone with measles is considered to be contagious from four days before the rash appears to four days after the rash appears and should isolate during that time.



### **What is the treatment for measles?**

There is no medication to treat measles and usually the infection resolves on its own in two to three weeks. Medical care is supportive and to help relieve symptoms and address complications such as bacterial infections. Severe measles cases among children, such as those who are hospitalized, should be treated with vitamin A. Vitamin A should be administered immediately on diagnosis and repeated the next day.

### **What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of measles?**

Measles can be prevented with MMR vaccine. The vaccine protects against three diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella.

### **Resources**

Heyman, D. (2015) Control of Communicable Disease Manual (20th edition).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/>

Delaware Division of Public Health's "Managing Infectious Disease in Childcare Settings." <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/epi/files/ChildCareManual2021.pdf>