



# Measles (Rubeola) FAQs

## What is measles?

- Measles is a very serious and very contagious (spreads easily from person to person) illness that is caused by a virus.
- Other names for measles are rubeola or red measles.
- Measles can be very dangerous especially for babies, pregnant women and those with immune compromising conditions.

## What are the symptoms of measles disease?

- Symptoms include:
  - High fever
  - Cough
  - Runny nose
  - Red sore eyes
  - Red blotchy rash that starts on the face and spreads down the body

## When do these symptoms appear?

- Fever, cough, runny nose and red sore eyes can appear 7-18 days after being close to someone with measles.
- The red blotchy rash appears 7-21 days after being close to someone with measles.

## What are the complications of measles disease?

- Complications include:
  - Ear infections
  - Pneumonia (lung infection)
  - Encephalitis (swelling of the brain) that can cause seizures, brain damage and death

## How is measles spread?

- The virus is spread easily through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes or by kissing, sharing food and drinks.
- The virus can remain in the air for up to 2 hours even after the infected person has left the room.
- You can spread the measles virus to others from 4 days before the rash starts until 4 days after the rash appears.
- The virus is most often spread when people first get sick, usually before they have been diagnosed with measles.

## What should you do if become ill or think you have been exposed to measles?

- If you are showing symptoms of measles, call a health care provider as soon as possible.
- Call first and describe your symptoms over the phone before your appointment. This way the clinic can arrange to see you without you being close to others in the waiting room.

## How is measles diagnosed?

Measles is based on your symptoms, possible exposure and your immunization history

- Your health care provider will confirm the diagnosis of measles with:
  - a blood test
  - a nasopharyngeal swab (i.e. swab of the back of your nose)
  - lab test of your urine

## How is Measles treated?

- There is no cure for measles, but measles usually gets better on its own in about 2-3 weeks.
- Measles is serious and you need to call your health care provider right away if you think you or someone in your family has or has been exposed to someone with measles.
- You will need to stay home and get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids and stay away from other people so that you do not spread the disease.
- Your health care provider may prescribe medication to reduce your fever.

- Staying home to prevent others from getting sick is very important. You will need to stay away from other people until after 4 days after the rash appeared.

## How do you prevent measles?

- Immunization is the best way to protect yourself, your children and your community
- Measles can be prevented through vaccination with a measles containing vaccine
- The vaccine for measles is safe and very effective
- Measles is part of the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine and the MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella and varicella) vaccine
- In the Northwest Territories, these vaccines are publicly funded and free of charge  
See the [NWT Immunization schedule](#) for more information.

### References:

NWT Immunization: <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/immunization-vaccination>

Government of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/measles.html>

Alberta Health: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/Pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=hw198187>