

Measles Quicksheet

December 2025

Background

Measles is a high contagious, vaccine-preventable viral respiratory illness. It typically begins like a common cold but is followed by Koplik spots (tiny white spots often in the mouth) and a rash. Measles is spread through contaminated air or infected surfaces with the virus able to survive for up to two hours in an airspace after an infected person leaves the area. Two doses of the Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) vaccine is about 97% effective at preventing measles.

Symptoms

Measles symptoms comes in stages and first present like a common cold with the following symptoms:

- High fever (may spike to $>104^{\circ}$)
- cough
- runny nose
- red, watery eyes

2-3 days after cold-like symptoms began:

- Koplik spots (tiny white spots inside the mouth)

3-5 days after cold-like symptoms began:

- Rash appears that typically begins on the head and spreads down the body

How Measles Spreads

Measles spreads via droplets in the air when a person with flu coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets then land on the mouth or nose of people nearby.

Measles is very contagious, infecting up to 90% of those exposed who are not immune.

Symptoms typically begin 7 – 14 days after contact with the virus.

What to do if I was exposed?

Contact your healthcare provider and make them aware before you arrive so they can give advice on precautions to take to avoid potentially exposing others.

How Contagious is Measles

Measles can be spread four days **before** onset of the rash and up to four days **after** onset of the rash (day of rash onset is day zero). The measles virus can live in the air for up to 2 hours after an infected person was in the room.

Prevention

Make sure you are up-to-date with the MMR vaccine

- Two doses of the MMR vaccine is about 97% effective at preventing an infection if exposed
- One dose of the MMR vaccine is about 93% effective at preventing an infection if exposed

Everyday steps to stop the spread of germs

- Stay home when sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash hands often
- Clean and disinfect surfaces regularly

Measles is common in other parts of the world and can be brought to the US through international travel too

Who is at risk?

If fully vaccinated, the risk of catching measles is very low. Those at highest risk include:

- Children under 12 months of age
- Pregnant persons
- Immunocompromised persons

Vaccine Schedule

	First Dose	Second Dose
Children	Age 12-15 months	Age 4-6 years
Teens and adults with no evidence of immunity	As soon as possible	N/A