



MEASLES

What is measles?

Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus.

How is it spread?

Measles virus is spread through close contact with the nose and throat secretions of an infected person especially during coughs and sneezes. Measles virus is able to survive in small droplets in the air for at least several hours. Less commonly, the virus can be spread through contact with articles freshly soiled with nasal and throat secretions of the infected person.

What are the symptoms?

The first symptoms are fever, aches and pain, runny nose, red inflamed eyes and cough. Spots (called Koplik's spots) may be seen in the mouth. They look like small grains of sand on a red base and are most often seen on the inner cheek opposite the molars. A rash (large red spots) appears on the face and head and spread down over the body to the arms and legs.

When do symptoms start?

Symptoms usually start seven to 18 days after exposure to the virus.

How long are people infectious?

Individuals with measles are usually infectious to others usually four days before and up to four days after the start of the rash.

How can measles be prevented?

Measles is a vaccine-preventable disease. All children should be vaccinated against measles in an effort to eliminate the measles virus. All children receive measles containing vaccine at 12 and 18 months of age. Adults should consult with their public health nurse regarding eligibility to receive the measles containing vaccine.

Families should practice the following good health habits:

- Clean hands well and often and teach children to clean their hands too.
- Do not share eating or drinking utensils.
- Clean surfaces that are frequently touched, including toys, door knobs, tables, and counters regularly with soap and water or cleaning wipes.
- Minimize close contact with other people when they are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, put your used tissue in the trash can and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Symptoms such as fever, aches, and pain can be relieved with acetaminophen.