

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



COUNTY MICHIGAN  
HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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## Measles

### What are Measles?

Measles is a rash illness caused by the Rubeola virus.

### Who can get Measles?

Anyone who has not had a confirmed case of Measles (mostly people born after 1956) and who have not been given a Measles vaccine.

### What are the symptoms of Measles?

- Hard dry cough
- Sneezing or runny nose
- Watery or red eyes
- Fever which rises when rash appears (101° F or higher)
- Rash that is red, raised, blotchy; starts on face, spreads to trunk, arms and legs
- Tiny white spots on the inner cheeks, gums, and roof of the mouth surrounded by redness

### How long after exposure do symptoms begin?

Cough, runny nose, watery eyes, and fever usually begin 10 days after exposure. The rash usually appears 4 days later.

### How are Measles spread?

Measles are easily spread by droplets from the nose, throat and mouth through sneezing, coughing and speaking. It occurs most commonly in late winter and early spring.

### How long is a person contagious?

A person can spread measles up to four days before until four days after the rash appears. Measles are highly contagious.

### Are there complications of Measles?

Otitis Media (ear infection) or pneumonia could occur as a result of measles. Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) is an uncommon, but serious complication of Measles. During pregnancy, Measles may cause the loss of the unborn baby. Death due to Measles is rare in the U.S.

### Is there a treatment for Measles?

Bed rest at home until at least 4 days after the appearance of the rash is necessary to not infect others. There is no specific treatment for Measles.

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## How can Measles be prevented?

- Measles can be prevented by vaccination.
- Measles vaccine is a 2 dose series.
- All healthy children should be vaccinated at 12 - 15 months with the combination shot for Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR).
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> MMR vaccine is usually given at 4 - 6 years of age. It can be given at any time as long as it is at least 4 weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> dose.
- Pregnant women should not get vaccinated as this is a live viral vaccine. All women of childbearing age should keep out of contact with those who have Measles.
- Be sure to keep a record of all immunizations. Write down when the shots were given.

## What if Measles occurs at school or a day care center?

All cases must be reported to your local health department within 24 hours. People born after 1956 who cannot prove that they either have had:

- 1) Laboratory evidence of immunity to Measles  
or
- 2) Measles vaccine after 12 months of age and a 2nd dose at least 4 weeks later,

should get a measles vaccine. Otherwise, they will be excluded from school/day care until at least 21 days after the beginning of the last Measles case.

**For more information on Measles, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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