



Measles

What is measles?

Measles, also known as “red Measles” or Rubeola, is one of the easiest viruses to spread from person to person. Anyone who is not fully immunized can be infected with measles.

How is it spread?

The measles virus is in the nose and throat of an infected person. It can spread easily to others when they come in contact with droplets of an infected person or the air when an infected person has breathed, coughed or sneezed. The virus can enter the body through the eyes, nose, or mouth.

Someone who is contagious with measles can spread it to others from four days before a rash appears to four days after the rash appears.

Measles virus can live up to two hours in the air after an infected person leaves the area.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of measles begin 7 to 21 days after being near someone who has measles and include fever, runny nose, cough, drowsiness, and red and watery eyes (conjunctivitis). Small white spots (known as “Koplik’s spots”) can also appear on the inside of the mouth and throat.

3 to 7 days after the start of the symptoms a red, blotchy (maculopapular) rash appears on the face and then continues down the body.

Complications can include middle ear infections, pneumonia, diarrhea or encephalitis (swelling of the brain).

How do I know if I have measles?

It is important that you see your doctor if you think you may have measles. Your doctor will order tests (urine, throat and blood) that are specific for the measles virus. When making the appointment, let your doctor’s office know that you may have measles so they can take special care to prevent spreading it to other people.

What is the treatment for measles?

There is no medicine to treat measles, but you can take medicine to help with the fever and itching.

How do I protect myself and others?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent measles. Measles vaccine is combined with mumps and rubella (MMR) and routinely given soon after a child’s first birthday. A second dose is given as part of a combination vaccine for measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV) at 4-6 years of age. The vaccine is free in Ontario. Proof of vaccination against measles, mumps and rubella, or a valid exemption is required by law for all children attending school in Ontario. Anyone with measles or suspected measles will not be allowed to go to school or work until the fifth day from when the rash started. People who are not fully immunized against measles will also not be allowed to go to school if there is a case of measles identified. People born before 1970 are considered protected from measles because they were most likely exposed as a child. Speak to your health care provider (HP) about the vaccine. If you do not have a HCP, call the Immunization Program at the health unit.

You can also help prevent the spread of measles by washing your hands after coughing, sneezing, and going to the washroom, and before preparing foods or eating. If you do cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth. Do not share cigarettes or drink from the same glass, water bottle or straw as others.

Is there anything special I need to know about measles?

If you have measles, it is important that you stay home and avoid contact with others until the fifth day from when the rash started. This is the time you are most infectious to other people.

For more information please contact your Health Connection at (705) 721-7520 or toll free at 1-877-721-7520.