



Measles

What is Measles?

Measles is a highly contagious infection caused by the measles virus.

Measles spreads easily through the air. It is passed in tiny droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or breathes. It can survive in the air for up to two hours.

A person with measles can spread the infection to others four days before to four days after the rash starts.

Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms of measles can develop 7 to 21 days after exposure to the virus. If you have had contact with someone who has been diagnosed with measles, it is important to monitor for symptoms for 21 days after your last exposure.

People infected with measles can spread the virus to others before they have symptoms.

Symptoms include a high fever, runny nose, cough, drowsiness, irritability and red eyes.

Small white spots may appear in the mouth and throat.

A red blotchy rash begins to appear on the face 3 to 7 days after the start of symptoms, then spreads down the body to the arms and legs. This rash usually lasts 4 to 7 days.

Most people fully recover from measles within 2 to 3 weeks if they do not develop complications.

Most complications of a measles infection are rare, but they can be dangerous. They can include ear infections, pneumonia and in some rare instances brain swelling and even death.



People at greatest risk for complications related to measles are unvaccinated infants, unvaccinated pregnant people, and people who are immunocompromised.

Prevention

The best protection against measles is vaccination. The vaccine is safe and effective.

In Ontario, the measles vaccine is combined with the mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

Two doses of measles vaccine are required and provide lifelong protection against measles.



Book a measles
vaccine appointment



View or submit your
child's immunization
records

What should I do if I was exposed to someone with measles?

If you were born before 1970 or have received two doses of measles vaccine, you are considered protected against measles infection.

If you have been exposed and are not protected, contact your healthcare provider and call your local public health unit as soon as possible.

What should I do if I have symptoms of measles?

If you or your child are experiencing measles symptoms, stay home and contact your healthcare provider immediately to discuss follow-up recommendations.


Do not attend work, school, public places or social activities.


There is no specific treatment or medication for a measles infection. Any treatment provided is meant to relieve symptoms and to prevent severe complications.


Before visiting a health care provider or emergency department, call ahead to let them know you might have measles. They will take appropriate precautions to prevent spread to others as soon as you arrive.

If you are diagnosed with measles, your local public health unit will contact you to determine:

- how you became infected
- any other individuals at risk that may have also been exposed to the virus

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GRAND ERIE
PUBLIC HEALTH

519-753-4937 | 519-426-6170
bchu.org | hnhu.org