

What is Measles?

Measles, also known as rubeola, is a highly contagious disease that spreads through the air when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes. It is caused by the measles virus, a single-stranded, enveloped RNA virus that infects only humans.¹

Did you know?

The first published clinical description of measles dates to 910.

Symptoms

Measles symptoms generally appear 7 to 14 days after exposure.² The illness has two phases: an early prodromal phase, followed by the rash phase.

Prodromal Phase:



High fever (can exceed 104°F)



Runny nose



Cough



Red eyes



Sore throat



Small white or gray lesions inside the cheeks (Koplik spots)¹

Rash Phase:

- ▶ Rash typically develops 3-5 days after the prodromal phase³
- ▶ Begins as flat red spots at the hairline before spreading down to the neck, trunk, arms, legs and feet
- ▶ Typically lasts 4-8 days before fading
- ▶ As the rash resolves, fever typically subsides

Fact: Some individuals may experience complications, such as diarrhea, ear infections, pneumonia, or encephalitis.^{1,3}

How Measles Spreads

The measles virus is transmitted from person to person and cannot be spread via animal hosts. The virus spreads when an infected person releases respiratory droplets through:



Coughing



Sneezing



Breathing while in close contact

Did you know?

People with measles can spread the virus from 4 days before symptoms appear to 4 days after rash appears.³

Fact: The measles virus can survive for up to 2 hours in the air or on surfaces.³

Take Action

► Help Reduce Exposure

- Encourage employees to stay home and isolate when sick
- Follow applicable public health guidance for suspected or confirmed measles cases
- Avoid shared indoor spaces recently occupied by a person with suspected or confirmed measles, as the virus can remain in the air for up to 2 hours after an infected person leaves^{3,4}
- Contact a healthcare provider or public health authority following a suspected exposure

► Reinforce Employee Health Practices

- Maintain policies for reporting illness and potential exposure
- Follow applicable requirements for excluding employees who are ill
- Educate employees about measles symptoms and how the virus spreads
- Encourage proper cough etiquette and social distancing
- Reinforce routine hand hygiene practices - using soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs if soap and water is not available

► Support a Clean and Healthy Environment

- Maintain routine, thorough cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, shared equipment and high-contact areas
- Follow product label instructions and established facility cleaning procedures
- Support effective ventilation and indoor air management practices where applicable

Did you know?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for measles. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles and reduce its spread.³

References & Further Information

1. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Clinical overview of measles. (2026, August 5)
2. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). About measles. (2026, April 29)
3. World Health Organization (WHO). Measles. (2026, July 15)
4. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). How measles spreads. (2026, April 29)

Learn more: ecolab.com/Measles

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