



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.

Public Health has issued specific recommendations for those who are travelling outside Canada, particularly to areas where measles is known to spread or to an area where there is a measles outbreak:

- Infants six to 12 months of age, should receive one dose of MMR vaccine prior to travelling. These children will still need to be vaccinated with MMR at 12 and 18 months of age.
- Individuals born in or after 1970 should ensure they have had two doses of MMR vaccine prior to travelling.
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Please contact your public health clinic for further information.

If you are unsure if the area you are visiting is at higher risk for measles, please discuss with your primary care practitioner or local public health office.

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 do I do if I have symptoms?

Residents who develop symptoms of measles are asked, unless it is a medical emergency, to call a health care provider or 811 immediately for further instruction.

People returning from travel abroad who feel sick are encouraged to put on a well-fitting N95 mask or medical mask, limit contact with others, and tell a flight attendant, cruise staff, or border services officer when entering the country to help reduce the spread of infectious diseases in Canada.

What is the treatment?

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