

What is Measles?

Measles is an infectious disease caused by the measles virus, which is spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It primarily affects the respiratory system but can lead to widespread body complications. The disease is preventable through vaccination.

Symptoms of Measles

The symptoms of measles typically appear 10-12 days after exposure to the virus and progress in stages. Early symptoms may resemble a cold or flu and include:

1. **Fever** – Often starts mild and increases over time.
2. **Cough** – A dry, persistent cough.
3. **Runny Nose** – Nasal congestion.
4. **Red, Watery Eyes** – Often accompanied by sensitivity to light.
5. **Sore Throat** – A painful throat.
6. **Tiny White Spots Inside the Mouth (Koplik spots)** – These appear before the rash and are an important sign of measles.
7. **Rash** – A red, blotchy rash that usually starts behind the ears and spreads to the face, neck, and body. It typically appears 3-5 days after the fever begins.

When To Consider Seeking Medical Attention?

If you suspect that your child has been exposed to the virus and is showing symptoms seek medical attention immediately. Early detection and proper care are important to reduce complications. If your child has received two doses of the measles vaccine they are considered measles immune.

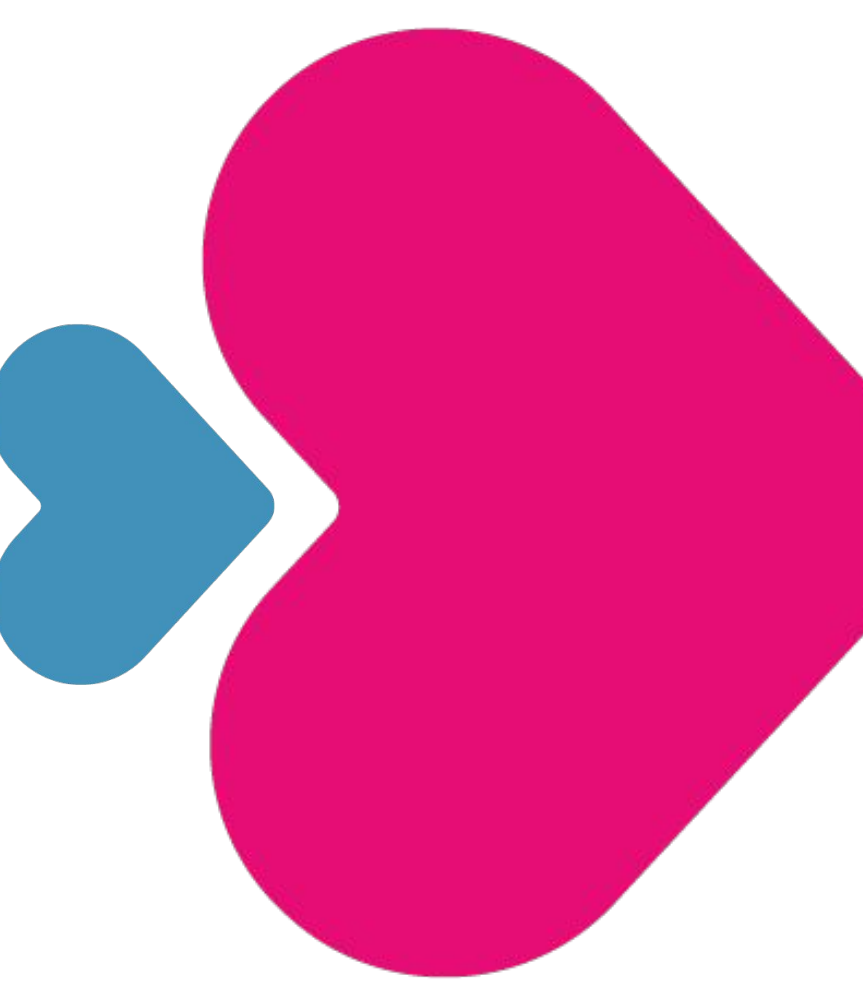
Important Warning Signs:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Severe cough or chest pain.
- Seizures or unusual behaviour.
- Loss of consciousness.

How is Measles Spread?

Measles is highly contagious. The virus spreads through tiny droplets in the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. It can live in the air or on surfaces for up to two hours, making it easy for others to contract the virus. It is most contagious during the early stages, even before the rash appears.





Prevention: The MMR Vaccine

The best way to protect your child from measles is through vaccination. The MMR vaccine (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) is safe and effective.

Vaccination Schedule:

- First dose: At 12-15 months of age.
- Second dose: Varies by province, either at 18 months or at 4-6yrs.

The MMR vaccine provides **99%** protection against measles and is usually given in combination with the vaccines for mumps and rubella. Children who receive both doses of the MMR vaccine are highly unlikely to contract measles.

Why is Vaccination Important?

- **Protects your child:** Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles.
- **Community protection (Herd Immunity):** When a high percentage of the community is vaccinated, it helps protect those who cannot be vaccinated, such as infants under 12 months, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems.
- **Prevents outbreaks:** Measles is still present in many parts of the world, and outbreaks can occur even in communities where the disease was thought to be eliminated.

Measles Complications

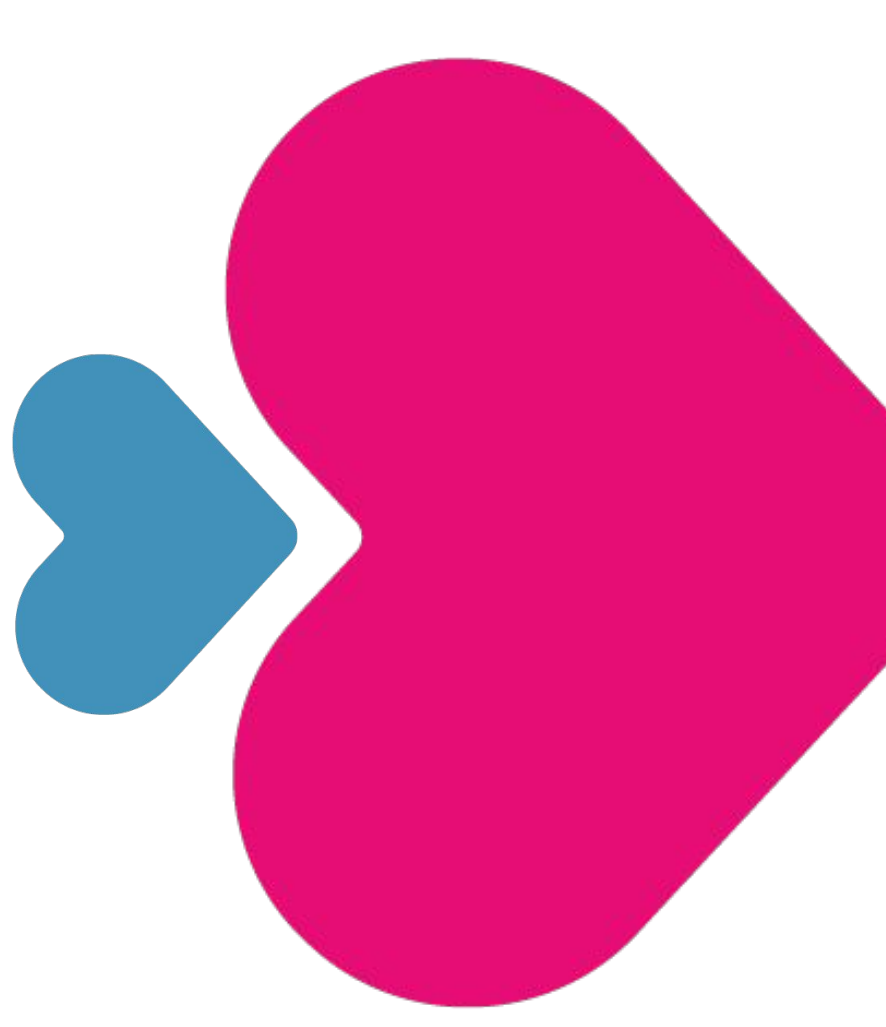
Although many children recover from measles without serious issues, the virus can cause severe health complications, including:

1. **Pneumonia** – A serious lung infection.
2. **Encephalitis** – Swelling of the brain, which can lead to permanent brain damage.
3. **Blindness** – Due to eye infections or complications.
4. **Diarrhea and Dehydration** – Often occurs in young children.
5. **Death** – In severe cases, especially in children under 5 or those with weakened immune systems.

Treatment for Measles

There is no specific antiviral treatment for measles. Treatment primarily focuses on managing symptoms and preventing complications:

1. **Fever and Pain Relief:** Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen and ibuprofen can help reduce fever and discomfort.
2. **Fluids:** Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.



3. **Rest:** Ensure your child gets adequate rest to help their immune system fight the infection.
4. **Isolation:** Keep your child home from school and away from other children until they have fully recovered to prevent spreading the virus.

If your child is at higher risk for complications (e.g., if they are very young, immunocompromised, or have a chronic illness), consult a healthcare provider for additional advice and care.

When is Measles Contagious?

A child with measles is contagious from about **four days before** the rash appears to **four days after** the rash develops. During this time, it is important to avoid contact with others, particularly those who are not vaccinated, pregnant, or have weakened immune systems.

Myths and Facts About Measles Vaccination

Myth: The MMR vaccine causes autism.

Fact: There is no scientific evidence linking the MMR vaccine to autism. Extensive research has shown that vaccines are safe and effective.

Myth: Measles is not a serious disease.

Fact: Measles can lead to serious complications, including brain damage and death. It is especially dangerous for young children, infants, and those with weakened immune systems.

How You Can Help Prevent Measles

- **Ensure your child is vaccinated:** Follow the recommended vaccine schedule to ensure full protection against measles and other diseases.
- **Educate others:** Help spread accurate information about the safety and importance of vaccines within your community.
- **Encourage good hygiene:** Teach your children to wash their hands regularly and cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing to prevent the spread of germs.
- **Stay informed:** Keep up to date with public health information on measles outbreaks in your area.

