

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Measles (Rubeola)

What is measles?

Measles is a very contagious viral infection that occurs most often in the late winter and spring. There are references to measles as early as the 7th century. Measles is an unpleasant illness and it can cause other serious health problems. Six to 20 percent of the people who have measles will get an ear infection, diarrhea, or even pneumonia. One out of 1,000 people with measles will develop inflammation of the brain and about one out of 1,000 will die.

What are the symptoms of measles?

About 10 days after exposure to the virus, the infected person has a fever lasting two to four days that can peak as high as 103° F to 105° F. This is followed by the onset of a cough, runny nose, and/or red eyes. The rash usually begins 14 days after exposure and lasts 5 to 6 days. The rash begins at the hairline, and then involves the face and neck. Over the next three days, the rash gradually spreads downward and outward, reaching the hands and feet.

How is measles spread?

The mucus in the nose and throat of an infected person contains the measles virus. When an infected person sneezes or coughs, droplets containing the virus are sprayed into the air. The droplets can directly land in other people's noses or throats when they breathe. The virus also remains active up to two hours on surfaces and people's hands can transfer the virus to their nose or throat from a contaminated surface (door knobs, countertops, keyboards, faucets). The virus can be spread by a person with measles from four days prior to the onset of the rash to four days after the onset.

How is measles diagnosed?

Diagnosis of measles used to be primarily based on the signs and symptoms of an infected person. Since vaccinations have made measles so uncommon in the USA, a confirmatory blood test is now recommended.

Who is at risk of getting measles?

- Children less than 12 months of age who are too young to receive the vaccine
- People born in or after 1957 who have not been vaccinated and have not had measles
- People vaccinated before age one

How can measles be prevented?

- Vaccinate children at appropriate ages with the first vaccination to be given between 12 and 15 months of age.
- People exposed to measles should check their immunization record or consult their physician or local health department to see if they need a protective vaccination.
- People with measles should be separated from non-immune people. This includes exclusion from public settings such as daycare centers, schools, or work.

Is the measles vaccine safe?

Measles vaccine has an excellent record for safety. However, people with poor immune systems should receive the vaccine only after they consult with their physician. Children with high fevers should have their vaccinations delayed until they have recovered. Women who are pregnant or who are considering becoming pregnant in the next three months should postpone receiving the vaccine.

(continued)

Where can I get more information?

Contact your doctor or the Southern Nevada Health District, Office of Epidemiology at (702) 759-1300.



625 Shadow Lane | P.O. Box 3902
Las Vegas, NV 89127 | 702.759.1000
www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

Updated 8-06