



# Measles Fact Sheet

## **What is measles?**

Measles, not to be confused with German measles (rubella), is an extremely contagious disease caused by a virus. A high fever and a red rash covering most of the body develop in almost every case. Measles can also cause pneumonia, deafness, and inflammation of the brain and death. In 2000, measles was declared eliminated in the United States. However, travelers still bring in measles frequently, and those unvaccinated are still at risk. Five large outbreaks have explained 89% of measles cases in the U.S. from January 1, 2015 to May 1, 2015.

## **Who gets measles?**

Anyone, regardless of age, who has not had measles or has not been adequately immunized, may get the disease. Most cases occur in unimmunized preschoolers and young adults.

## **How is measles spread?**

Measles is spread through the air by droplets from the nose, throat, and mouth of an infected person by coughing, sneezing, or simply talking. Measles is an extremely contagious disease. An infected individual will spread measles to 90% of those who are not immune to measles virus. Immunity typically occurs through vaccination or previous measles infection.

## **What are the symptoms of measles?**

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Red rash which moves from the face to the rest of the body

The symptoms may last from 1 to 2 weeks.

## **How long is an infected person able to spread measles?**

An infected person is able to spread measles from 4 days before the rash starts to 4 days after the rash appears.

## **Can a person get measles again?**

No. One attack of measles provides protection for life.

## **What is the treatment for measles?**

Bedrest is advisable while the patient has a fever. Infants with very high fever and children with headaches should be treated with anti-fever medicines.

## **Should people who have been around a person infected with measles be treated?**

Anyone who has not had measles or has not been immunized should receive measles vaccine immediately. Infants under one year old may receive immune globulin (IG) or measles vaccine depending on the child's age.

## **How can the spread of measles be stopped?**

The best way to stop measles is to immunize all children by 15 months of age with measles vaccine (combined with rubella and mumps vaccines or MMR). A second dose of measles vaccine between 4 and 6 years of age or before starting kindergarten is now required for children entering school in Oklahoma. Adults born after 1956 may also need measles vaccine.

*For further information, contact the Oklahoma City-County Health Department  
(405) 425-4437*



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## **Does measles vaccine cause reactions?**

Measles vaccine is typically combined with mumps, rubella, and varicella into a single vaccine (called MMRV). In the past, varicella was not in the combined vaccine (MMR). About 1 child in 5 will develop a rash or fever which begins a week or two after vaccination and lasts a few days. Some more serious adverse reactions have been reported, but the low frequency (1 in 800,000 doses) of these side effects makes it hard to confirm (and somewhat unlikely) they were caused by the vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states have reported that no links have been found between any vaccine ingredients and autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

## **Where can children receive measles vaccine?**

Children and adults may receive measles vaccine at county health departments throughout Oklahoma or check with your private doctor.

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revised 06/2015

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