



MEASLES AND THE VACCINE TO PREVENT IT

The best way to protect against measles is to get the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (called the MMR vaccine). Doctors recommend that all children get the MMR vaccine.

Why should my child get the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine:

- Protects your child from measles, a potentially serious disease, as well as mumps and rubella.
- Prevents your child from getting an uncomfortable rash and high fever from measles.
- Keeps your child from missing school or childcare (and keeps you from missing work to care for your sick child).

Is the MMR vaccine safe?

Yes. The MMR vaccine is very safe, and it is effective at preventing measles (as well as mumps and rubella). Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. But most children who get the MMR vaccine have no side effects.

What are the side effects?

Most children do not have any side effects from the vaccine. The side effects that do occur are usually very mild, such as a fever, rash, soreness or swelling where the vaccine was given, or temporary pain and stiffness in the joints (mostly in teens and adults). More serious side effects are rare. These may include high fever that could cause a seizure.

What is measles?

Measles is a serious respiratory disease (in the lungs and breathing tubes) that causes a rash and fever. It is very contagious. In rare cases, it can be deadly.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles starts with a fever that can get very high. Some of the other symptoms that may occur are:

- Cough, runny nose, and red eyes
- Rash of tiny, red spots that start at the head and spread to the rest of the body
- Diarrhea
- Ear infection

Is it serious?

Measles can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children. From 2001-2013, 28% of children younger than 5 years old who had measles had to be treated in the hospital.

For some children, measles can lead to:

- Pneumonia (a serious lung infection)
- Lifelong brain damage
- Deafness
- Death



MEASLES AND THE VACCINE TO PREVENT IT (Continued)

How does measles spread?

Measles spreads when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes. It is very contagious. You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, up to 2 hours after that person is gone. And you can catch measles from an infected person even before they have a measles rash. Almost everyone who has not had the MMR vaccine will get measles if they are exposed to the measles virus.

Where do measles cases in the United States come from?

Every year, unvaccinated U.S. residents get measles while they are abroad and bring the disease into the United States and spread it to others. Measles is common in other parts of the world, including countries in Europe, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and Africa. Worldwide, about 20 million people get measles each year. When people with measles travel into the United States, they can spread the disease to unvaccinated people including children too young to be vaccinated.

How many measles cases are there in the United States each year?

From year to year, measles cases can range from roughly less than 100 to a couple hundred. However, in some years like 2014, there were more measles cases than usual. In 2014, 667 people from 27 states were reported as having measles. In 2019, there were 1,250 reported cases of measles (January – September). This is the greatest number of cases reported in the U.S. since 1992. Many of these people got measles in the United States after being exposed to someone who got measles while in another country. The majority of cases are among people who were not vaccinated against measles.



Recommendations

Doctors recommend that your child get 2 doses of the MMR vaccine for best protection. Your child will need one dose at each of the following ages:

- 12 through 15 months
- 4 through 6 years

Infants 6 months to 11 months old should have 1 dose of MMR vaccine before traveling to another country.

Where can I learn more about the MMR vaccine and my child?

To learn more about the MMR vaccine, talk to your child's healthcare provider or visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents.



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