

# Patient Information for Rubeola - Skin in Child

Prodromal Phase

## Overview

Measles (also known as rubeola) is a very contagious infection of the respiratory system that is caused by a virus. Measles is more common in developing countries, since most people in industrialized nations are vaccinated. However, "cluster outbreaks" (local outbreaks in communities with clusters of unvaccinated individuals) can still occur, for example, when an unvaccinated international traveler visits or returns home. They may not know they have measles yet (the first symptoms are like a common cold) and accidentally infect someone who is not vaccinated.

The development (incubation) period, after the measles virus infects the upper airways (upper respiratory tract), is about 10 days. The patient then has 3 or 4 days of cold-like symptoms, followed by a rash. The patient is usually well after 2 weeks of illness and then has life-long resistance (immunity) to becoming infected again. Complications from measles more commonly occur in children aged younger than 5 and adults older than 20. Serious complications of measles include blindness, inflammation of the brain caused by infection (encephalitis), severe diarrhea that may potentially lead to dehydration, ear infections, and severe respiratory infections. The most common cause of death associated with measles is from pneumonia. The majority of deaths from measles occur in developing countries.

## Who's At Risk

Measles occurs all over the world, primarily in late winter and spring. Most children in the United States have been immunized against measles, but the disease still occurs in unvaccinated individuals.

## Signs & Symptoms

- The first signs of infection are a bad cough, runny nose, fever, and red, watery eyes.
- Sometimes, at this stage, small red spots with blue-white centers appear inside the mouth ("Koplik spots").
- After 3-4 days, a rash begins with red spots, first appearing behind the ears and at the forehead, spreading down the neck, arms, trunk, and finally the legs. The red spots can merge together on the face.
- Measles does not usually itch.

## Self-Care Guidelines

- Make sure everyone in contact with the ill child has been vaccinated against measles or had measles in the past.
- Treat fever with acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen.
- Encourage the child to drink fluid and to rest.
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer to reduce coughing.

## **When to Seek Medical Care**

- Call your child's doctor if you think he or she has measles. Measles is especially dangerous for infants and children with weakened immune systems due to illness or certain medications.
- Call the doctor immediately if the child has problems breathing, confusion, vision problems, or pain in the chest or belly.

## **Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe**

There are no medications to cure measles, but the doctor can recommend ways to reduce symptoms such as fever or cough. Your doctor may prescribe a dose of vitamin A once a day for 2 days.

# **Patient Information for Rubeola - Skin in Adult**

Prodromal Phase

## **Overview**

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