

ARE YOU READY?

Get the facts on measles

Before there was a vaccine, 3 million to 4 million people in the U.S. got measles every year. Because people don't see the disease, they forget how bad it can be. But measles can be very serious. That's why vaccination is so important.



What is measles?

Measles is caused by a virus. It's very contagious. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if one person has measles, 90% of people near that person who have not gotten their shot or have a weak immune system will also get sick.

If you get measles, symptoms usually appear seven to 14 days after you're infected. The first symptoms are a fever, cough, runny nose and red, watery eyes. About two to three days after symptoms appear, you may get small white spots in your mouth. After three days, a rash spreads on your skin from your head to your feet.

Kids with measles can get complications like swelling in their brains, causing permanent deafness and learning disabilities. Children with measles can also develop pneumonia, which can lead to death. And in some cases, even after they recover from measles, people die from a related disease years later because of damage to their brains and nervous systems.

How is measles spread?

Someone who's infected with measles can spread it by sneezing and coughing. The measles virus can live up to two hours in the air after a person sneezes or coughs.

If someone who isn't immune to measles breathes the infected air, they can get sick. You can also get sick by touching an infected surface and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.





If there's a vaccine, why do people get measles?

Measles is still common in some areas of the world, with almost 90,000 deaths in 2016. People can get measles when they travel and carry the disease with them. It spreads to people who haven't been vaccinated. Outbreaks in the U.S. have happened this way, with increases in some years.

Unfortunately, some parents are hesitant about vaccinating their kids. Sometimes they have received bad information and they're scared. But there's no reason to be frightened:

The measles vaccine is safe and it protects children. Not vaccinating your kids puts both your child and others at risk. If you're not sure what to do, talk to your doctor or another health care provider.

How can I prevent measles?

You can protect your kids from measles by getting them vaccinated. Children need two doses of a vaccine that protects them from measles as well as mumps and rubella, two other illnesses. Adults who have not been vaccinated against measles should also get two doses.

Getting both doses is nearly 100% effective. You won't need a booster shot in the future once you've gotten the two doses.



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