

Exposed to Measles? What You Need to Know



This document will explain what you need to do if you have been told that you have been exposed to measles. In some cases, your prompt actions within the first 3-6 days after you have been exposed may reduce the chance of measles infection for you, your family, and the community.

“Exposed” means you’ve been in a situation where you can catch the virus from someone who already has measles. For example, you can be unknowingly exposed to the measles virus by being in the same room, home, office, or waiting room with someone who has measles or by being there up to 2 hours after the person with measles has left.

People who do not have immune protection to measles (from vaccination records, a blood test, or documentation of a past measles infection) may need to quarantine. Quarantine means staying at home and away from other people. This includes not going shopping, to work, to school, or to religious services. Whether or not you need to quarantine depends upon your age, documentation of immune protection to measles, and other medical conditions you have. Public Health will talk with you to review the need to quarantine and help determine the appropriate quarantine dates.

What you need to know about measles

- Measles is an **extremely contagious** viral infection that is **spread** through coughing and sneezing (respiratory secretions) and by breathing the same air as a person with measles.
- The **first symptoms** of measles are high fever followed by cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. These symptoms usually appear 8 to 12 days after you were exposed.
- **Later symptoms** are a fever that rises and a rash - flat, red spots that start on the face and spread to the neck, chest, trunk, and then out to the arms and legs. Small, raised bumps may appear on top of the flat red spots. Rash usually appears about 14 days after you were exposed but can take as long as 21 days. People with measles are contagious from 4 days before they get a rash, until the 4th day after the rash starts.
- Measles can cause more serious health problems, too. These include ear infection, diarrhea, pneumonia, miscarriage, brain inflammation, and hospitalization. Measles can even cause death.
- Measles can be prevented with a safe and effective MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine.

What you should do if exposed

Immediately call your healthcare provider and let them know that you have been exposed to someone who has measles. Your healthcare provider can:

- Check to see if you have been vaccinated against measles.
- Make special arrangements to evaluate you, if needed, without putting other patients and medical staff at risk.
- Please note: when a case of measles occurs in a school building, school exclusion for K-12 students with waivers or exemptions to measles vaccination may be different than quarantine requirements. School exclusion will be communicated by the child’s school.

A. If you have been vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR vaccine

- If you are healthy and have documentation that you have had two doses of MMR, you still need to watch for symptoms of measles for 21 days following an exposure (fever and cough, runny nose, or red, watery eyes). If you develop any symptoms, stay home (do not go to school, work, shopping, etc.) and call your doctor immediately and tell them you might have been exposed to measles and the symptoms you are having.
- If your immune system is currently weakened by disease or medications, even if you have received two doses of MMR vaccine, call your doctor right away and tell them you might have been exposed to measles as you might need a medication called immune globulin.

**B. If you have been vaccinated with 1 dose of MMR vaccine**

One dose of MMR vaccine is approximately 93% effective at preventing measles infection and 2 doses of MMR vaccine are approximately 97% effective at preventing measles infection.

- *If you are healthy and have documentation that you have had 1 dose of MMR vaccine*, you will not need to quarantine at home, however you should get a 2nd dose of MMR vaccine within 3 days of your exposure. The second MMR dose should be given at least 28 days after the first dose. Talk to your doctor or local health department about receiving a 2nd dose of MMR vaccine. Note that K-12 students are required to have two doses of MMR. Students without 2 doses of MMR will be contacted by the school regarding school exclusion when a case of measles occurs in the school building.
- Monitor for possible symptoms of measles, such as fever, cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes and/or rash for 21 days after your last exposure to measles. If you develop any symptoms, stay home (do not go to school, work, shopping, etc.), call your doctor before visiting their office and tell them that you may have measles so they can make special arrangements to evaluate you without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.

C. If you have NOT been vaccinated for measles, but do have documentation of immunity to measles or documentation of past measles infection:

- You are considered immune to measles. Documentation of immunity to measles or documentation of past measles infection is sufficient evidence of immunity to measles.
- Even though you are considered immune, monitor for symptoms of measles for 21 days following an exposure (fever, cough, runny nose, and/or red, watery eyes and/or rash). If you develop any symptoms, stay home (do not go to school, work, shopping, etc.) and call your doctor immediately and tell them you might have been exposed to measles and the symptoms you are having.

D. If you have NOT been vaccinated for measles and do NOT have documentation of immunity to measles or documentation of past measles infection:

- You are likely NOT IMMUNE to measles and could get sick and make other people sick. Quarantine at home immediately. Follow the guidance below to determine what you should do based on your age and health status.
 - If you are **NOT** pregnant, do **NOT** have a weakened immune system, and are **at least 6 months old*** and were exposed within the last 3 days (72 hours), you should get a dose of MMR vaccine to help lower your risk of becoming ill.
 - If you receive a dose of MMR vaccine within 72 hours of exposure, you may return to school, work, or other normal activities UNLESS you are a healthcare worker†.
 - **If you do not get a dose of MMR vaccine within 72 hours of exposure, you must quarantine at home for 21 days after the last exposure.** Avoid having visitors for the full **21 days** after you were exposed. Do not go out shopping or to work, school, or religious services during this time. School exclusion periods for students with waivers or exemptions to vaccination may be longer if ongoing measles cases are occurring in the school building. Exclusion periods will be communicated by the school.
 - Monitor for possible symptoms of measles, such as fever, cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes or rash for 21 days after your last exposure to measles. If you develop any symptoms call your doctor **before** visiting their office and tell them that you may have measles so they can make special arrangements to evaluate you without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.
 - If you are **NOT** pregnant, do **NOT** have a weakened immune system, and are **at least 6 months old and less than 12 months old*‡** and were exposed more than 3 days ago but within the last 6 days, an MMR vaccine will not adequately protect you from becoming ill, but you can get a medication called immune globulin to lower your risk of getting measles.
 - Receiving immune globulin lowers your chance of getting sick but does not completely prevent possible infection. It does help reduce the severity of symptoms if you do become ill.



- **Exposed people who are not immune and who receive immune globulin need to be quarantined at home for 28 days after the last exposure.** Avoid having visitors for the full **28 days** after you were exposed. Do not go out shopping or to work, school, or religious services during this time.
- Monitor for possible symptoms of measles, such as fever, cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes and/or rash for 28 days after your last exposure to measles. If you develop any symptoms call your doctor **before** visiting their office and tell them that you may have measles so they can make special arrangements to evaluate you without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.

* Infants aged 6-12 months who receive a dose of MMR vaccine after an exposure will still need to receive 2 doses of MMR vaccine according to the recommended vaccine schedule. Talk to your pediatrician for more information about appropriate timing for additional vaccinations.

† Healthcare workers without evidence of immunity should NOT return to work following an exposure, even if they receive a dose of MMR vaccine. They should be given a dose of MMR vaccine and be excluded from work from day 5 after the first exposure to day 21 following the last exposure.

¥ Infants who receive immune globulin after an exposure will still need to get 2 doses of MMR vaccine according to recommended vaccine schedule. However, the first dose of MMR vaccine should NOT be given at the same time as the immune globulin and NOT before 6-8 months from the date the immune globulin was given depending on route of administration. Talk to your pediatrician for more information about appropriate timing for additional vaccinations.

- If you **ARE** pregnant, **DO** have a weakened immune system, or **are less than 6 months old** and you were exposed within the last 6 days, you can get a medication called immune globulin to lower your risk of getting measles.
 - Receiving immune globulin lowers your chance of getting sick but does not completely prevent possible infection. It does help reduce the severity of symptoms if you do become ill.
 - **Exposed people who are not immune and who receive immune globulin need to quarantine themselves at home for 28 days after the last exposure.** Avoid having visitors for the full **28 days** after you were exposed. Do not go out shopping or to work, school or religious services during this time.
 - Monitor for possible symptoms of measles, such as fever, cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes, or rash for 28 days after your last exposure to measles. If you develop any symptoms call your doctor **before** visiting their office and tell them that you may have measles so they can make special arrangements to evaluate you without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.

E. If you have NOT had any doses of MMR vaccine, do NOT have documentation of immunity or past infection, and you REFUSE or are UNABLE to get a dose of MMR or immune globulin in the recommended time period after exposure:

- You are not immune to measles and are at high risk of becoming ill. Because people can spread measles to others before the rash even begins, you could be contagious now and at risk for spreading the disease to those around you.
- You must quarantine at home. It is very important for you to stay home and away from other people for **21 full days after you were exposed. This is the time you could get sick and infect other people.** Avoid having visitors for the full 21 days after you were exposed. Do not go out shopping or to work, school or religious services during this time. Keep children home and away from others 21 full days after exposure.
- Monitor for symptoms of measles, such as fever, cough, runny nose, red, watery eyes, or rash for 21 days after your last exposure to measles. If you develop any symptoms call your doctor **before** visiting their office and tell them that you may have measles so they can make special arrangements to evaluate you without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.
- Once the 21-day period has passed, if you did not become infected with measles, talk to your doctor about getting the measles vaccine to prevent you from getting sick in the future.
- School exclusion periods for K-12 students with waivers or exemptions to vaccination may be longer in the event of ongoing measles cases within the school building. Exclusion periods will be communicated by the school.