

# MEASLES FACT SHEET



Cook County  
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Public Health

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Measles is a serious respiratory disease (in the lungs and breathing tubes). It causes a rash and fever. It is very contagious. In rare cases, it can be deadly. Measles is so contagious that 90 percent of unvaccinated people will get it, if exposed.



## 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 (starts on head)
- Diarrhea
- Ear infection

## Is measles serious?

Measles can be dangerous, especially for babies and young children. For some children, measles can lead to:

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



**1 in 5 people  
will be hospitalized**



## How does measles spread?

- Measles spreads when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes.
- You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, up to two 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 shot will get measles if they are exposed to the measles virus.

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Two doses of the MMR vaccine are recommended for children by healthcare providers as the best way to protect against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR).

## When should my child get the MMR shot?

One dose at each of the following ages:



Before traveling to another country, infants 6 to 11 months should get 1 dose of the MMR shot.

## Why should my child get the MMR shot?

- Protects your child from measles, a potentially serious disease, as well as mumps and rubella.
- Protects your child from getting an uncomfortable rash and high fever from measles.
- Keeps your child from missing school or child care and you from missing work.

## What are the side effects of the shot?

Most children don't have any side effects from the shot. The side effects that do occur are usually mild and may include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever
- Mild rash
- Temporary pain and stiffness in the joints
- More serious side effects are rare. These may include high fever that could cause a seizure.

## Follow the vaccine schedule

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Family Physicians, and American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommend children receive all vaccines according to the recommended [vaccine schedule](#).
- [Get a list of vaccines](#) that your child may need based on age, health conditions, and other factors.

## The MMR vaccine is safe and effective

- The measles shot is very safe and is effective at preventing measles. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own.
- Scientists in the United States and other countries have carefully studied the MMR shot. None has found a link between autism and the MMR shot.

## Before, during and after shots

Prepare for your child's vaccine visit and learn about how you can:

- Research vaccines and ready your child before the visit
- Comfort your child during the appointment
- Care for your child after the shot
- Visit the [CDC website](#)



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