

Measles

What Are the Measles?

Measles is a serious respiratory disease that is spread easily through coughing and sneezing. Measles is a very contagious virus that can spread even if the person with measles is no longer in the room. Measles can also be spread by an infected person before a rash or any other symptoms appear. Measles is spread from person to person through the air by infectious droplets.

What are Symptoms of the Measles?

- Fever—which can become very high;
- Runny nose;
- Cough;
- Feeling run-down, achy (also known as malaise);
- Red, watery eyes (similar to pink eye), light bothers the eyes;
- A rash that runs from the hairline to the face and neck; and
- Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth (Koplik’s spots).

What Special Precautions Are Required for Measles?

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop the measles from spreading to other patients in the hospital. These precautions include:

- A room by yourself with your door shut and negative air pressure in place;
- A fit-tested N95 mask will be worn by everyone who cares for you. Only immune staff and visitors should enter your room;
- A sign placed on your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions;
- Your room and the equipment used in your room will be cleaned and disinfected regularly;
- Everyone who leaves your room must clean their hands; and
- Your activities outside your room will be restricted.

What About My Family and Friends?

Your family and visitors are required to wear a N95 mask upon entering your room. Only immune family and visitors should enter your room. Posters outside your room show how to safely wear the masks. Your family and visitors should not assist other patients with their personal care. Before leaving your room, your family and visitors must remove the masks. Then, they must clean their hands with alcohol hand rub.

How Can I Prevent the Spread of Measles?

Typically you only get measles once and will develop immunity. However, to prevent measles, everyone who is not, should get vaccinated. The vaccine available for measles is a shot that combines the vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). Two doses of the MMR vaccine is recommend for children, starting between 12 and 15 months. The second dose should be given before the child enters kindergarten (between 4 and 6 years of age). The vaccine protects you by preparing your body to fight the measles virus.

Good Hand Hygiene Practices

Our staff welcomes reminders to clean our hands. We invite you to ask anyone who enters your room to clean their hands before and after they touch you. Ask any staff member to show you good hand cleaning (20 seconds of soap and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub for 20 seconds until hands are dry). Please clean your hands often and ask for help to clean your hands if needed:

- After using the bathroom;
- After blowing your nose;
- Before eating and drinking;
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wounds;
- When your hands are visibly dirty; and
- Before you leave your room.

What Is the Treatment for Measles?

There is no treatment for measles. We ask that you stay away from others and rest in bed. You may treat with cough syrup and skin lotions to lessen fever, coughing and itching. You usually recover in about two to three weeks but sometimes measles can cause complications such as pneumonia, hearing loss, brain swelling (encephalitis) or seizures.

Questions? Infection Prevention and Control department 519-464-4400 Ext. 5253.

References:

Adapted from the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC): Infection Prevention and You 'Measles' (2014)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/health-topics/immunization/vaccine-preventable-diseases/measles>