

What is measles?

Measles is a disease caused by a virus that spreads very easily from person to person. It usually lasts a week or two. Measles looks and feels like a cold or the flu at first. A cough, high fever, runny nose and red, watery eyes are common. A few days later, a red, blotchy rash starts on the face, then spreads to the rest of the body.

Is measles dangerous?

Yes. Measles is most dangerous for children under 5 years of age, adults over 20 years of age, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems.

How is measles spread?

Measles is more easily spread than almost any other disease. The virus that causes measles lives in the nose and throat and is sprayed into the air when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks. Touching tissues or sharing a cup used by someone who has measles can also spread the virus. People with measles can spread the disease 4 days before the rash begins until 4 days after rash onset. The first symptoms appear 10 - 14 days after a person is exposed.

Who gets measles?

- Anyone who never had measles and has never been vaccinated.
- Babies younger than 12 months old, because they are too young to be vaccinated.
- Adults who were vaccinated before 1968, because some early vaccines did not give lasting protection.
- A very small percentage of vaccinated children and adults who may not have responded well to the vaccine.

How is measles diagnosed?

Because measles can look like other diseases that cause a rash, the only sure way to know if you have measles is to get a blood test. Sometimes tests will also be done on urine or a swab from your nose or throat.

How can you prevent measles?

- Measles vaccine is usually given in a shot called MMR, which protects against measles, mumps and rubella.
- State regulations require certain groups to be vaccinated against measles. Some health care workers and all children in kindergarten – 12th grade and college need to have 2 doses of MMR vaccine for school entry. Children in child care and preschool need 1 dose of MMR and childcare workers also need to have 1 or 2 doses of measles containing vaccine, depending on their age and other factors. A blood test that proves immunity can also be used to fulfill this requirement for all groups.
- Adults born in or after 1957 should have at least 1 dose of MMR.
- People in high risk groups such as health care workers (paid, unpaid and volunteer), health science students and international travelers should have 2 doses of MMR, *regardless* of year of birth.
- Women who plan to have children and are not immune should get MMR at least 4 weeks before getting pregnant. People with measles should be kept away from people who are not immune until they are well again.
- If you have been exposed to someone with measles, talk to your doctor right away to see if you need a vaccination

Is MMR vaccine safe?

Yes. It is safe for most people. However, a vaccine, like other medicines, can cause side effects in some people.

Who should not get MMR vaccine?

- People who have serious allergies to gelatin, the drug neomycin or a previous dose of the vaccine.
- Pregnant women or women who are trying to get pregnant within 4 weeks should not get MMR vaccine until after they deliver their babies.
- People with cancer, HIV or other problems, or treatments that weaken the immune system should check with their doctor or nurse before getting vaccinated.
- People who have recently had a transfusion or were given other blood products should check with their doctor or nurse before getting vaccinated.
- People with high fevers should not be vaccinated until after the fever and other symptoms are gone.

Bergen Community College Policy

- Students entering the college for the first time and registering for 12 or more credit hours of course study per semester/term is required to submit proof of immunization (2MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) dates or positive blood titers)
- Those students that do not provide documentation will have an immunization hold. This means he/she cannot register for the following semester, grades cannot be seen, and financial aid can be affected.

Where can I get more information?

- Health Services, Room HS 100, 201-447-9257
- CDC National Immunization Information Hotline:
- English: 1-800-232-2522 or Spanish: 1-800-232-0233 (Mon – Fri, 8am – 11pm)
- TTY: 1-800-243-7889 (Mon – Fri, 10am – 10pm)