

# MEASLES

## What is Measles?

Measles is a highly contagious illness and is caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, sleepiness, irritability (feeling cranky or in a bad mood). Small, white spots may also show up inside the mouth and throat. After 3 to 7 days, a red blotchy rash develops on the face and spreads down the body.

## How can measles be spread?

Measles is a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose and throat of an infected person. It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. Also, measles virus can live for up to two hours in the air where the sick person coughed or sneezed. If other people breathe the contaminated air they can become infected.

Measles can be prevented by getting a vaccine that is safe, effective and free of charge.

## The Measles Vaccine

One dose provides about 85% protection and two doses over 95% protection.

Two documented doses of measles-containing vaccine after the first birthday is considered protected.

One dose provides protection in about 85 per cent of people, and two doses provide over 95 per cent.

There are two measles-containing vaccines in Canada: MMR (measles-mumps-rubella) and MMRV (measles-mumps-rubella-varicella). MMRV also provides protection from chicken pox (varicella). Both vaccines are made up of weakened, live viruses.

Please refer to the [MMR and MMRV vaccine fact sheet](#) for more information.

**Infants:** at greatest risk since routine vaccination for measles does not begin until one year of age. Infants going to areas where there is measles can get the vaccine at 6 months of age before travel.

**Born in 1970 or later:** you need 2 doses of measles vaccine for protection if you did not have measles. In Ontario, Children routinely get vaccinated after their first birthday and between ages of 4-6.

**Born before 1970:** may have had measles infection, since measles was present a lot during this time. Can get vaccinated if unsure.

**Travellers to areas where measles is present:** should get vaccinated before travel if they are not up-to-date or never had a measles infection. Go to:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/measles/data/global-measles-outbreaks.html>

**Health care workers:** need to be immune to work in health care. This includes either having proof of vaccinations or immunity (blood test) or record of confirmed measles infection.

**Unsure about immunity:** Get vaccinated with at least one dose of measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR).

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/diseases-medications-vaccines/measles-mumps-rubella-varicella-mmr-mmr-v-vaccines>

### **What to do if you have Measles:**

- Your doctor is required by law to report any positive cases of measles to Toronto Public Health.
- You may receive a telephone call from a representative from the Health Department.
- Good hand washing is the most important infection control practice.
- You should always wash your hands after using the toilet, after touching dirty surfaces, before preparing meals and before eating.
- Use alcohol based hand rub. Make sure that you have enough product on your hands to ensure that they remain wet for 15 seconds while you rub your hands together
- If your hands are visibly soiled, wash them with soap and water for at least 15 seconds. Rinse hands thoroughly and pat dry with a paper towel. Turn off the taps using the paper towel.
- Apply lotion several times throughout the day to help prevent dry, cracked skin.

What should I do at home?

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Stay at home while you are feeling sick to prevent spread of this viral illness to others.
- Limit visitors as much as possible while you are feeling ill and ensure pregnant woman and children under one year of age do not visit until you have been cleared by your doctor.
- For household cleaning use an all-purpose cleaner and follow the directions on the label.
- Wash dishes as usual with dish soap and water.
- No special handling of garbage is required.
- Launder clothes as usual. This illness if reported to Toronto Public Health If you have any further questions regarding this, please ask your care provider(s) or ask them to call Infection Prevention and Control.