



PATIENT ADVICE FOR PROBABLE / CONFIRMED MEASLES

Dept of Public Health HSE South West May 2024

Telephone: 021-4927601

1. What is Measles?

Measles infection is caused by a virus, and spreads between people very easily. Once symptoms start, people can become unwell quickly. You can get measles at any age, but it is often young children who catch it.

2. How did I catch Measles?

You can catch measles through close contact with someone who has measles. This could be from the air when they cough or sneeze, or by touching things that someone with measles has coughed or sneezed on. Measles spreads very easily in households and in other places where people mix closely together.

You can be protected from catching measles if you have had 2 doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, or if you have had measles infection before.

A person with measles can spread the infection in the 4 days before they get the rash until 4 days after they develop their rash.

3. How is Measles treated?

A person with measles usually starts to get better in about a week.

After seeing your GP or hospital doctor, there are things you can do to help ease the symptoms and reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others, such as:

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids such as water, to avoid dehydration
- Take / give your child paracetamol or ibuprofen for a high temperature – check the packaging or leaflet insert to make sure the medicine is suitable for you/your child. Check with your pharmacist or GP if you are unsure.
- Use cotton wool soaked in warm water to gently remove any crusts from your/your child's eyes

Important

- Stay away from crèche, childminder, school or work for at least 4 days after the rash first appears.
- Try to avoid contact with babies and anyone who is pregnant or has a weakened immune system.

4. How to avoid spreading or catching Measles?

Measles is spread when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes.

You are infectious from when you first have symptoms (around 4 days before the rash appears) until 4 days after you get the rash.

There are things you can do to reduce the risk of spreading or catching measles:

DO:



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- wash your hands often with soap and warm water
- use tissues when you cough or sneeze
- throw used tissues in the bin
- make sure family and friends are vaccinated with MMR vaccine (the vaccine is available free of charge from your GP or HSE clinics)

DO NOT:

- share cutlery, cups, towels, clothes, or bedding

5. Are there complication I should look out for?

Measles can lead to serious problems if it spreads to other parts of the body, such as the lungs or brain.

Problems that can be caused by measles include:

- pneumonia
- meningitis
- blindness
- seizures (fits)

These problems are rare, but some people are more at risk. This includes babies and people with weakened immune systems.

6. Measles and Pregnancy

If you get measles when you are pregnant, it could harm your baby.

It can cause:

- miscarriage or stillbirth
- premature birth (before the 37th week of pregnancy)
- your baby having a low birthweight

It is important to get medical advice if you are pregnant and have been in close contact with someone who has measles.

Immediate action required: Call 112/999 or go to hospital Emergency Dept (phone first) if:

You or your child has measles and:

- have a seizure (fit)
- severe difficulty breathing –gaspings, choking or not able to get words out (babies may make grunting noises or their stomach may suck under their ribcage)
- are unable to stay awake – cannot keep their eyes open for more than a few seconds
- suddenly become confused – your child may be very unsettled, behaving differently, or crying non-stop
- your child is limp, floppy or not responding normally – their head may fall to the side, backwards or forwards, or they may find it difficult to lift their head and focus on your face
- a rash that does not fade when you press a glass against it, a stiff neck, or find light uncomfortable or painful