

MEASLES FACT SHEET

(Updated February 13, 2015)

Make sure you are protected against measles! **The best way to prevent measles is to get vaccinated.** The vaccine is highly effective. The measles vaccine, called MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) has been available in the US for over 40 years. Many people have already received two doses of MMR vaccine and are considered immune to measles, but others may need one or two doses of vaccine.

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. It begins with a fever that lasts for a couple of days, followed by a cough, runny nose and conjunctivitis (pink/red eyes). A rash starts on the face and upper neck, spreads down the back and trunk, then extends to the arms and hands, as well as the legs and feet. The disease can be more serious for some people causing middle ear infection, pneumonia, encephalitis (brain swelling) and, rarely, even death. Most people get better about a week after the rash develops.

How is measles spread?

Measles is spread when a sick person coughs or sneezes. The measles virus can stay in the air and on surfaces for 1 or 2 hours. You can catch measles just by being in the same room with someone with measles and up to 2 hours after that person is gone. People with measles are contagious from about 4 days before the rash starts (before they know they have the disease) through 4 days after the rash begins.

How soon after infection do symptoms start?

Usually about 7-12 days (but up to 21 days) after exposure, measles begins with a mild to moderate fever of 101°F or more accompanied by cough, runny nose, and pink or red eyes. Two or three days later, the fever spikes, often as high as 104°F -105°F. At the same time, a red blotchy rash appears, usually first on the face, along the hairline and behind the ears, and spreads downward.

Key Points:

- Measles spreads very easily.
- Vaccination with two doses of the measles-containing vaccine is the best way to prevent getting and spreading measles.
- Solano Public health is taking steps to prevent and limit the spread of measles in the County.

What happens if there is a measles exposure?

The first step that public health takes when it learns of a confirmed measles case is to determine who the person came in contact with. Someone who is exposed to a measles case is called a **contact**.

Contacts without documentation of MMR vaccine or those with only 1 documented dose of MMR vaccine are usually excluded from certain settings or quarantined at home for up to 21 days.

Contacts who meet one of the criteria below are assumed to be immune and can usually continue their normal daily activities:

- Were born before 1957 or
- Have written documentation of 2 doses of MMR vaccine given at least 28 days apart or
- Have had measles infection confirmed by a physician before or
- Have received a blood test confirming immunity to measles

What should I do now?

The best way to protect yourself and your family from measles is to make sure that everyone has received 2 MMR vaccines. Individuals who are not fully protected through vaccination or previous measles infection may need to stay at home without going to school or work for 21 days if they are exposed to measles. If you or a family member still needs one or two doses of vaccine, contact your health care provider.