

# What is measles?

Information for parents and carers



leeds children's  
hospital

caring about children



# Measles is a highly contagious infection caused by a virus.

It is characterised by the following symptoms:

- Fever (often over 39 degrees)
- Cough
- Coryza (cold symptoms)
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Red or brown blotchy rash that starts on the face and spreads down the body
- White spots in the mouth

## How is measles spread?

By respiratory droplets such as coughing, or sneezing. Direct close contact with someone with measles for 15 minutes is enough to become infected. Measles is extremely infectious, every one person with measles can infect between 15 to 20 susceptible people.

## How is measles diagnosed?

A clinician will be able to diagnose measles from the symptoms and signs of the condition. The UK Health Security Agency will contact you to arrange swab testing at home if you are discharged.

## What can I do to protect my child or myself from measles?

- **Get vaccinated with two doses of MMR.**

The first dose is offered when your child reaches the age of 12-13 months old. The second dose is given when your child is 3 years and 4 months old.

- **It is never too late to change your mind and get your child or yourself vaccinated.**

Vaccinations provide 93% protection after one dose and 97% protection after the second dose.

**Please contact your GP to get a vaccine.**

## My child has been diagnosed with measles - what next?

There is no treatment for measles itself, but there are things you can do to help your child through the infection.

- Make sure they are drinking plenty of fluid (water, breast milk, or formula depending on the age of your child).
- If they are distressed, tired or in pain with a fever, then you can give them paracetamol or ibuprofen (see more information at the end of this leaflet).
- Clean any eye discharge with a cotton wool pad soaked with warm water, wiping from inside to out, using a new pad for each eye.
- Make sure that you practise good hand hygiene to prevent the spread and to isolate your child for the infectious period (see next page).

## Infectious and isolation period

Your child will be infectious **from four days before the onset of the rash until four full days after the rash starts**. They must isolate for this time period.

If measles is diagnosed or suspected please keep them off school or nursery, and away from people with a lower immune system and those who are unvaccinated such as young babies, pregnant women, and those on treatment lowering the immune system.

## When to worry?

The majority of people will recover from measles within a week however there are some complications that can occur.

### Milder, but more common complications

- Diarrhoea
- Otitis media (middle ear infection)
- Measles croup

### More serious but rarer complications

- Pneumonia (infection of the lungs)
- Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain)

**Please attend your GP if your child has any of the following:**

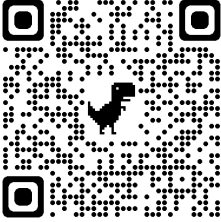
- Ear pain/discharge
- A high temperature for five days or more in a row
- Signs of dehydration
- Increased tiredness

**Please return to the Paediatric Emergency Department if your child suffers any of the following:**

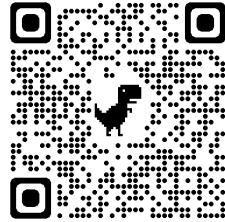
- Breathing difficulties
- Non blanching rash
- Floppy, pale or mottled skin
- Seizures
- Confusion, abnormal behaviour or altered consciousness

## More information

You can find out more about measles by scanning the QR codes below or clicking on the links.



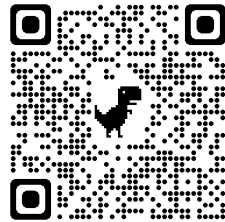
[Managing a fever](#)



[MMR vaccine information](#)



[Measles \(NHS website\)](#)



[Measles \(Healthier Together\)](#)



## What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/nhsleedsfft](https://bit.ly/nhsleedsfft)

*Your views matter*



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