



## Health Fact Sheet: Measles

### What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious, serious disease caused by a virus. Measles is caused by a virus in the paramyxovirus family and it is normally passed through direct contact and through the air. The virus infects the mucous membranes, then spreads throughout the body. Measles is a human disease and is not known to occur in animals.

### What are signs and symptoms?

- The first sign of measles is usually a high fever, which begins about 10 to 12 days after exposure to the virus, and lasts 4 to 7 days.
- runny nose
- cough
- red and watery eyes
- small white spots inside the cheeks can develop in the initial stage.
- After several days, a rash erupts, usually on the face and upper neck. Over about 3 days, the rash spreads, eventually reaching the hands and feet. The rash lasts for 5 to 6 days, and then fades.

### Who is at risk?

Unvaccinated young children are at highest risk of measles and its complications, including death. Unvaccinated pregnant women are also at risk. Any non-immune person (who has not been vaccinated or was vaccinated but did not develop immunity) can become infected.

### How is measles spread?

The highly contagious virus is spread by coughing and sneezing, close personal contact or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions.

The virus remains active and contagious in the air or on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours. It can be transmitted by an infected person from 4 days prior to the onset of the rash to 4 days after the rash erupts.



### **How to treat measles?**

No specific antiviral treatment exists for measles virus.

Severe complications from measles can be avoided through supportive care that ensures good nutrition, adequate fluid intake and treatment of dehydration with WHO-recommended oral rehydration solution. This solution replaces fluids and other essential elements that are lost through diarrhoea or vomiting. Antibiotics should be prescribed to treat eye and ear infections, and pneumonia.

### **Is there a vaccine for measles?**

Yes. Measles vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and is given in combination with mumps and rubella vaccine. A second dose of measles is given pre-school, around four to six years. The vaccine is highly effective.

### **Note: According to DHA**

**Measles cases: Exclusion from school for at least five days from the appearance of rash, or until receipt of medical certificate of recovery from infection.**