

Facts About Measles for Adults

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious virus found throughout the world. People get measles disease by breathing in the measles virus which is spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. You can get measles just by being in the same room with an infected person.

Prevention

There is a vaccine to protect against measles. The vaccine is frequently given as part of a combination vaccine, called the MMR vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps and rubella. There is also a vaccine that protects only against measles.

Symptoms

Symptoms of measles include high fever, rash, runny nose, watery eyes and coughing.

The average time between exposure to the measles virus and the development of symptoms is usually from 10 to 14 days.

Who should get MMR vaccine?

- ◆ Adults born in 1957 or later who do not have a medical contraindication should receive at least one dose of the MMR vaccine, unless they have documentation of vaccination with at least one dose of measles-, rubella-, and mumps-containing vaccine or other acceptable evidence of immunity to these three diseases.
- ◆ College and university students, health care personnel, non-pregnant women of childbearing age, child care workers such as teachers and day care personnel and international travelers are at increased risk for measles, and should receive two doses of the MMR vaccine to ensure adequate protection.

Vaccine Safety

The measles vaccine and the combined MMR vaccine are very safe and effective and generally have few side effects. Mild reactions such as fever, redness or swelling at the injection site have been reported. As with any medicine, there are very small risks that serious problems could occur after getting the vaccine. However, the potential risks associated with measles disease are much greater than the potential risks associated with the measles vaccine.

Facts About Measles for Adults

- FACT:** Measles can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine.
- FACT:** The risk of death from measles is higher for infants and adults than for children.
- FACT:** Of the 56 confirmed cases of measles reported in 2003, nearly 37% occurred in people 20 years of age and older.
- FACT:** Pregnant women who get measles disease have an increased risk for early labor, miscarriage, and low birth weight infants.
- FACT:** Measles is contagious from 4 days before until 4 days after the rash appears.
- FACT:** Measles can cause life-threatening pneumonia and brain inflammation, middle-ear infection, severe diarrhea and sometimes death.
- FACT:** The largest measles outbreak in the U.S., in 1996, primarily affected those who had not received a second dose of the MMR vaccine.
- FACT:** Twenty-eight states and one district require proof of having received two doses of measles vaccine prior to college enrollment.
- FACT:** Most cases of measles in the United States now result from infections acquired in other countries or are linked to such imported cases.
- FACT:** Globally, 30 to 40 million cases of measles occur annually, resulting in approximately 500,000 deaths.