

How do you prevent measles?

- **By immunisation** - there is a safe and effective vaccine, which protects against measles. It is one of the “M” components in MMR vaccine and a child needs two doses of this vaccine, one at 13 - 15 months and another dose pre-school.
- Protection can be life long.
- If a child or young adult has not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine, this can be given at any age.
- By avoiding close personal contact with a person with measles if you are at risk. Because measles vaccine is a “live” vaccine, it is not recommended that children who have a weakened immune system e.g. because of medication or chemotherapy, should be vaccinated so these children are particularly vulnerable and should avoid contact whenever possible.
- If you are pregnant and you have been in contact with measles always discuss this with your GP or midwife immediately so that he/she can advise you appropriately.

For more information about **Measles** contact:

*The Community Infection Control Nurse at your
local Primary Care Trust (PCT)
or your local Health Protection Unit
or
<http://www.hpa.org.uk/topics>*



HPA North West



Measles

INFORMATION LEAFLET

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What is measles?

Measles is a highly infectious illness caused by a virus (germ).

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Irritability
- Cold-like symptoms - running nose
- Sore and runny eyes
- Dry “croupy” cough
- White spots on the gums (2nd and 3rd day)
- Rash (3rd or 4th day) starting on the face and behind the ears, then spreading down the body.
- Diarrhoea - often in the early stages in children.

Serious complications of measles infection can occur such as ear infections (approx. 1 in 20), bronchitis/pneumonia (approx. 1 in 25), convulsions (approx. 1 in 200), and in rare cases, encephalitis (infection of the brain) or meningitis (approx. 1 in 1,000) may occur.

The likelihood of problems varies with age, and complications are generally more common in young babies, older children and adults.

Who does it affect?

ANYONE - who has not developed natural immunity or has not been vaccinated against measles, children are most vulnerable though, but babies up to approximately 6 months are generally protected by their mother’s antibodies.

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period (the period when someone has the infection but is not displaying symptoms) is on average 10 days.

Is measles infectious?

MEASLES IS VERY INFECTIOUS and you catch it by being in close contact with someone who already has the infection. The virus is passed in the secretions of the infected person’s nose and throat and is spread by their sneezing and coughing. Also it is possible to catch measles from direct contact with articles which have been contaminated by these infected secretions e.g. hankies or tissues.

Do you need treatment?

There is no specific treatment for measles but an appropriate medicine to help bring down a high temperature should be used (**DO NOT USE ASPIRIN IN CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE.** If a secondary infection develops then the doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat this e.g. an ear or chest infection.

2 – 6 weeks after the illness, a swab may be taken from the mouth of the infected person. This is to confirm if it was a definite case of measles. Your GP will be informed of the results.

Do you need to stay off school /work / nursery?

YES - measles is infectious from just before the symptoms first occur and for approximately 4 days after the appearance of the rash.

General advice is to stay off school or work for **4 days from the onset of rash.**