



Measles: A guide for parents

Dear Parent,

When an incidence of Measles is reported, the school and parents take appropriate precautions immediately. Below are some guidelines and precautionary steps for you to consider for your child as well.

The Healthspring team has put together useful information, including common questions that you may have and also some easy steps for you to take, to protect your child.

Please go through it and call us, or write to us, in case there are any further questions or if you require further information. You can reach us at Shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in, call 61303535 and ask to speak to Dr. Khullar.

What is Measles? Is this serious? How do I know if my child is infected?

Measles is an infectious viral disease causing fever and a red rash, typically occurring in childhood. The global estimates for the year 2013 suggest that close to 0.14 million deaths were attributed to measles, accounting for nearly 16 deaths each hour. Study findings have indicated that more than 50% of the global measles-associated deaths were reported in India alone. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the majority of the 667 people in 2014 and 189 people in 2015 who contracted measles in the US were not vaccinated.

Measles symptoms invariably include [fever](#), together with at least one of *the three C's* (cough, coryza, [conjunctivitis](#)). Symptoms will appear about 9-11 days after infection.

Measles symptoms may include the following:

- Coryza - runny nose.
- Dry hacking cough.
- Conjunctivitis - swollen eyelids, inflamed eyes.
- Watery eyes.

- Photophobia - sensitivity to light.
- Sneezing.
- Fever - this may be mild to severe and can reach 105F (40.6C) for a number of days. Fever may drop, and then rise again when the rash appears.
- Koplik's spots - very small grayish-white spots with bluish-white centers in the mouth, insides of cheeks, and throat.
- Aches generally all over the body.
- Rash - 3 to 4 days after initial symptoms a reddish-brown spotty rash appears. The rash can last for over a week. It usually starts behind the ears and spreads all over the head and neck. After a couple of days it spreads to the rest of the body, including the legs. As the little spots grow many of them will join together.

What causes measles?

Measles is caused by infection with the *rubeola virus*, a *paramyxovirus* of the genus *Morbillivirus*. The virus lives in the mucus of the nose and throat of an infected child or adult. The infected person is contagious for four days before the rash appears, and continues so for about four to five days afterwards.

One can become infected through:

- Physical contact with an infected person.
- Being nearby infected people if they cough or sneeze.
- Touching a surface that has infected droplets of mucus (the virus remains active for two hours) and then putting your fingers into your mouth, rubbing your nose or eyes.

Complications:

Complications from measles are fairly common, and are more likely to get worse for patients who have weak immune systems, those with vitamin deficiency, and very young children. Adults over the age of 20 are more likely to have complications than healthy children over the age of 5.

About 20% of people who develop measles have some kind of complication, which may include:

- **Diarrhea.**
- **Vomiting.**
- **Eye infection.**
- **Laryngitis and bronchitis** - [laryngitis](#) is [inflammation](#) of the voice box. [Bronchitis](#) is inflammation of the inner walls that line the main air passageways. About 4% of people with measles have difficulties breathing.
- **Otitis media** - inner ear infection and inflammation.
- **Febrile convulsion** - fits caused by fever. Occurs in 1 in 200 cases. May be alarming, but children usually make a full recovery.
- **Pneumonia** - patients with weakened immune system who develop measles are vulnerable to an especially dangerous type of [pneumonia](#) (*Streptococcus pneumoniae*) which can be fatal.

What should you do as a parent?

There is no specific measles treatment. If there are no complications the doctor will recommend plenty of rest and normal measures to control the fever and prevent [dehydration](#) (drink fluids). Symptoms will usually go away within 7 to 10 days.

If your child has measles, the following measures may help:

- **Fever** - if the temperature is high try to keep the child cool, but make sure he/she is not cold. Tylenol (paracetamol, acetaminophen) or ibuprofens are effective in controlling fever, as well as aches and pain.
- **Photophobia** - as the child may be painfully sensitive to light, keeping the lights dim or the room darkened may help. Sunglasses may also help.
- **Conjunctivitis** - if there is crustiness around the eyes gently clean with damp cotton wool. Refresh and Toba eye drops as prescribed can be used.
- **Cough** - cough medicines will not relieve the cough. Making the room more humid by placing a bowl of water may help the cough.
- **Dehydration** - make sure the child is hydrated. If the child has a fever he/she can become dehydrated more quickly. Encourage the child to drink plenty of fluids.

- **Isolation** - while children are contagious they should be kept away from school and should not return to activities that involve human interaction. Non-immunized people who have never had measles should be kept out of the house.
- **Vitamin A supplements** - studies have shown that Vitamin A supplements significantly help prevent complications caused by measles. Supplements are recommended for children with [vitamin A](#) deficiency and children under the age of two who have severe measles. Vitamin A deficiency is virtually non-existent in developed countries, but fairly common in much of the developing world.

When should I seek help?

You should see a doctor urgently if your child:

- has trouble feeding or is not able to drink fluids
- has difficulty breathing
- is very irritable and is not wanting to be held
- is becoming more tired, sleepy or drowsy
- develops a worsening headache
- improves and then suddenly becomes worse
- doesn't seem to be improving or you are concerned for any reason

When is my child ready to go back to school?

The child needs to be isolated for four days after the rash .He/she can join school when he/she is free from fever and is comfortable.

What can you do to prevent the disease?

Prevention of measles

People who have already had measles are immune and will not get it again - cases of re-infection are extremely rare.

The most effective way to prevent the disease is through Immunization. The first dose of MMR now is given at 9 months and the second dose at 15 months.

- A special immunization -- [immune globulin](#) -- may be necessary for certain high-risk people after they are exposed to measles. These include children younger than 1 year, children with weakened immune systems, and pregnant women.

Hope this answers your questions, and be assured that Oberoi International School and Healthspring are vigilant, and will help keep your child healthy. Please do feel free to reach out to us if you have any more questions.