

February Newsletter

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Measles

Measles is a highly contagious, vaccine-preventable viral illness, characterized by a high fever and rash. As a result of coughing or sneezing, the measles virus can survive for up to two hours suspended in the air. The incubation period for measles ranges from seven to 21 days. Measles is transmitted predominantly through respiratory droplets, and less often by aerosol droplets.

Measles is contagious four days prior to and four days after the rash appears. As a result, it can be difficult to control the spread of measles, since people can spread measles before they show the typical measles rash. The first symptoms of measles are typically fever, cough, conjunctivitis, and runny nose. Following this, within two to four days, they develop the characteristic measles rash.

The measles rash often presents as a combination of a flat and bumpy rash that begins on the face and moves down the body over a period of time.

Measles can be a dangerous disease since approximately 30% of people who acquire Measles will experience complications as well. The complications of measles include encephalitis, pneumonia, and croup. Measles is also dangerous during pregnancy and can lead to multiple pregnancy complications.

In the U.S., the first dose of the MMR vaccine, which includes the measles vaccine, is given at 12 months and the second dose is typically given at 4 years of age. A single dose of MMR vaccine is 93% effective against measles, 78% effective against mumps, and 97% effective against rubella.

The second dose of the MMR vaccine is 97% effective against measles and 88% effective against mumps infection. If a child has a fever and rash and is not yet vaccinated against Measles, it is important to consider the possibility of Measles infection.

Already in 2024 there have been 35 confirmed cases of Measles in the United States. This follows 2023 where a total of 58 cases of Measles were confirmed in the U.S.

Across other parts of the world there are also significant increases in the number of cases of Measles in the past 3 years. Measles is an important disease to talk to your pediatrician about before traveling internationally with infants under 12 months prior to their MMR vaccine. Although Measles is preventable, cases are increasing due to poor vaccine uptake.

Sources:

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