

Measles Video – ASL, long version

Hello. This is a message from the Washington State Department of Health. Today, we're sharing important information about measles. We'll explain:

- What measles is
- How it spreads
- How to prevent it
- And what to do if you are exposed.

First, what is measles?

Measles is a virus. It is very contagious. This means it spreads easily from person to person. Because it spreads so easily, measles can move quickly through communities.

Measles spreads through the air and on surfaces. You don't need direct contact with someone who has measles in order to get sick.

When a person with measles talks, coughs or sneezes, the virus goes into the air. Other people can breathe in that air and become infected. The virus can stay in the air and on surfaces like tables or doorknobs for up to two hours. If someone touches a surface with the virus on it and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth, they can become infected with measles.

In the past, measles was a common disease that infected millions of children each year. After most people in the United States were vaccinated to prevent measles, the disease became very rare. In recent years, fewer people have been getting vaccinated for measles. Now the disease has become much more common in the United States, and in Washington State.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Symptoms usually appear 7 to 14 days after you're exposed. Early symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes

A few days later, a rash appears. It usually starts on the face. Then it spreads down the body—to the neck, chest, arms, and legs. The fever might get worse. Some people feel very tired and very sick.

Why is measles so serious?

Most people recover from measles, but some can have serious problems-- like ear infections, pneumonia, or brain swelling. Young children and people with weaker immune systems are more likely to have these complications.

People at higher risk of measles include:

- Infants under 12 months
- Unvaccinated pregnant people and their unborn babies
- People with weakened immune systems, whether from illness or medical treatment

Because of these risks, prevention is very important.

How can you avoid getting measles?

The best way to prevent measles is vaccination. The vaccine is called MMR. The MMR vaccine protects against 3 diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella. A similar vaccine, MMRV, also protects against varicella (chicken pox).

The MMR vaccine is the strongest and safest protection against measles. Two doses are most effective. One dose of MMR vaccine prevents measles in 93% of people, and two doses prevent measles in 97% of people. If a vaccinated person does get measles, the illness is usually milder.

Vaccination also helps protect your family and your community. Vaccinated people act as a barrier to stop measles from spreading, which protects those who are more at risk. This is especially important for people who cannot get vaccinated. We call this ‘community immunity.’

If you have any questions about measles vaccination, please talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or healthcare provider.

What should you do if you are exposed to measles?

If you think you were near someone who has measles, which we call being “exposed” to measles, act quickly. First, check your immunization records to see if you have been vaccinated.

If you are not sure if you have been immunized for measles, there are a few ways you can check. You can ask your health care provider if you are up to date on the MMR vaccine. You can sign up for myirmobile.com to view and print your family’s immunization records online from the Washington State immunization registry. You can also contact the Office of Immunization to get your records by calling 360-236-3595 or 1-866-397-0337.

Making sure everyone who can be vaccinated has their measles shots is the best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community.

If you are not immune or are unsure about your vaccination status, stay home and avoid contact with others while you watch for measles symptoms. If you have measles, symptoms usually show up 7 to 21 days after exposure.

When watching for symptoms for 21 days, pay attention to:

- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red eyes
- Rash

What do you do if you develop measles symptoms?

If you or your family were exposed to measles, and within 21 days, you feel measles symptoms, immediately call your doctor or health care provider.

If you think you may have measles, stay home and try to isolate yourself from other household members as much as possible. Do not go to work, school, or public places. Avoid contact with other people, especially infants, pregnant people, and people with weak immune systems. Call your doctor or health care provider. Do not go to a healthcare office without calling first. Calling ahead helps prevent exposing others. They will give you special instructions to prepare for your arrival to avoid exposing others.

How can you reduce the spread of measles and protect your community?

Measles spreads quickly, but it is preventable. Vaccination protects you. It also protects people around you. Stay home if you are sick and avoid close contact with people who are sick. These steps help slow the spread of many illnesses, including measles.

By staying home when sick and acting quickly after exposure, you can help stop the spread of measles.

The Washington State Department of Health and your local public health departments are here to help. Please see our websites for more information about measles, and for contact details.

Measles is serious, but prevention works. Protect yourself, protect your family, and protect your community.