

# Protecting your family against measles

## What is measles?

Measles is a serious illness that is spreading in our communities. It is caused by a highly contagious virus that spreads when someone with the virus talks, coughs or sneezes. It can stay in a room for two hours after the person has left.

Babies, young children, pregnant people, older adults and others with weaker immune systems are most likely to get very sick with measles.

## How can my family and I prevent measles?

The measles vaccine (also called the MMR vaccine) is the strongest protection. One dose prevents 93% of people from getting measles, and two doses protect 97% of people. You also should stay away from people who may be infected.

## How does the vaccine work? Is it safe?

The measles vaccine is given as two shots. The shots have a weakened form of the virus that teaches your body to fight off the disease. The MMR vaccine also protects against mumps and rubella.

The vaccine has been proven to be safe over many decades. Some people have side effects for a day or two. The side effects are much less serious than measles. Your health care provider or pharmacist can answer questions about the vaccine you might have.

## Here is what to know if you are unvaccinated against measles.

**You should watch for symptoms.** Most unvaccinated people exposed to the measles virus get sick. If you have a high fever, cough and red eyes, stay home and apart from other people, including family members. If you see a rash, call a clinic or doctor.

**If you are exposed to measles, you should stay home for 21 days, even if you don't see symptoms.** Avoid contact with others, because you can spread the virus before you feel sick.

**You still can get vaccinated within 72 hours of being exposed to measles.** This can protect you from getting sick or reduce your symptoms.

[doh.wa.gov/measles](https://doh.wa.gov/measles)

## How can I get vaccinated?

Your clinic, pharmacy or doctor's office can give you and your family the measles vaccine. Free vaccines are available for children and for adults without insurance. Free rides to the clinic are available in some areas, too.



Scan here for a map showing free measles vaccine locations for adults without insurance and for children 18 and younger.