

Measles

This leaflet explains what measles is, how it will affect your child and how the infection is treated. If you have any questions or concerns that aren't answered here, please speak to one of the nursing staff.

What is measles?

Measles is a viral infection, usually affecting children, that causes fever, a rash and tiredness and irritability.

It's now fairly uncommon in the UK because of the effectiveness of vaccination. However, the UK has now lost its 'measle-free' status because the take up of MMR has fallen since 2016.

Anyone can get measles if they have not been vaccinated or have not had it before, although it is most common in young children.

The infection has a typical incubation period of 10 days, with further symptoms for a further 2-4 days.

Is it contagious?

Yes. Measles is infectious up to 4 days before the symptoms appear until 4 days after the rash appears. It is spread by direct contact with sneezing and coughing. You should make sure you wash your hands after touching your child's skin if you suspect they have measles.

How do I know if my child has measles?

The first symptoms are usually tiredness, fever, conjunctivitis, cough and cold symptoms and spots on the cheek or in the mouth. A child with measles may also be sensitive to bright light. A few days later, a bright red rash usually spreads from the face and neck downward to the rest of the body. The rash lasts about 4-7 days.

The initial symptoms of measles develop around 10 days after you're infected.

What is the treatment for measles?

- There is no specific treatment for measles.
- Rest and plenty of fluids will help treat the symptoms and reducing the amount of clothing or bedding and giving paracetamol (Calpol) as instructed on the bottle label if required should help with the fever.
- Use of ibuprofen (Nurofen) to relieve high temperatures.
- Use cotton wool soaked in warm water to help remove any crust from your child's eyes, to make them more comfortable.
- A measles vaccine can be given to people in close contact with the ill child, if they have not already been immunised. This vaccine can be given up to 72 hours after exposure to the disease.

What should I do if I think my child has measles?

See your GP. If your child is well enough to visit the surgery. Inform the surgery staff that you are bringing someone with suspected measles in as they may put you in a side waiting room. Measles can be more serious for the following:

- New-born babies.
- Children younger than 13 months who have not been vaccinated.
- Those with poor resistance to infection (the immuno-suppressed).

Can measles be prevented?

The MMR vaccine, which combines vaccines for measles, mumps and German measles, is available to children at 13 months of age and again before they go to school. Recent concerns about a link between the MMR vaccine and inflammatory bowel disease / autism have been investigated by the Department of Health. **They concluded that the MMR vaccine was the safest and best option for children.** However, parents who have any concerns about vaccinating their child with the MMR vaccine should discuss the matter further with their GP or health visitor.

Measles, mumps and rubella vaccines are not available separately on the NHS. The NHS does not recommend single measles, mumps or rubella vaccines because there is no evidence to support the use of single vaccines or to suggest that they are 'safer' than MMR. Having single vaccines puts your child at risk of catching measles, mumps or rubella in the time in between the vaccines.

How soon can my child return to school?

Your child should stay off school for at least 4 days after the rash first appeared and until they are feeling well enough to return.

Contacting us

Paediatric Emergency Department: 0118 322 6875 / 6876

NHS 111: You should use the NHS 111 service if you urgently need medical help or advice but it is not a life-threatening situation. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Further information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/pages/introduction.aspx

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: January 2025

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