MOUNT NITTANY®
HEALTH

Measles

About measles

Measles, or rubeola, is a highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus. The disease is spread through the air and can easily be contracted by being in the vicinity of an infected person who is coughing and sneezing.[1]

Before a measles vaccine was widely used in the U.S., almost all children got the disease. Now, very few U.S. children get measles. From 2001 to 2013, the number of cases reported in the U.S. ranged from 37 to 220 per year. Measles remains common in other parts of the world where the vaccine is not widely used. Worldwide the disease still claims more than 100,000 lives a year, mostly in children under the age of five.[2]

Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear about seven to 14 days after exposure to measles and can include:
- Fever
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Red eyes
- Sore throat
- Koplik spots (tiny, white spots on the roof of the mouth)

These symptoms are followed approximately three days later by a rash that can spread over the entire body. High fever, up to 104° Fahrenheit, often accompanies the appearance of the rash.[1] In most cases, fever and rash usually subside after a few days.[2]

Vaccination

MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine is a two-shot series, usually given during early childhood. A child should receive the first shot when he or she is between 12 to 15 months, and the second when he or she is between four to six years of age.[3]

One dose is about 93 percent effective at preventing measles, and two doses proves to be about 97 percent effective.

Adults who were born before 1957 are generally considered immune to measles. Adults who were born in 1957 or after should have documentation of one or more doses of the MMR vaccine.[4]

Vaccination safety

The MMR vaccine has a good safety record. Most children who get the vaccine do not experience any problems or side effects. In some cases, however, minor side effects may occur. These include pain where the shot was given, fever, mild rash, or swelling of the neck or cheek. In very rare cases, allergic reactions or seizures may occur.

What do I do if I get measles?

Call your doctor right away if you think you or your child may have been exposed to measles or if you or your child has a rash resembling measles.[1] Because of the nature of the disease, your doctor may ask you to come in after hours to reduce the risk of exposing others to this highly contagious disease.

If you have recently traveled within or outside of the U.S., make your doctor aware.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for this viral illness other than supportive care. Care generally involves:

- Staying hydrated - Drink beverages high in electrolytes, such as Pedialyte, Gatorade or Powerade.
- Treating fever - If fever is causing discomfort, medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others) can help reduce the fever.

Non-immunized or partly immunized individuals, including infants older than 12 months of age, may receive the measles vaccination within 72 hours of exposure to measles. The disease may still develop, but it should be a milder, shorter case.

Immune serum globulin may be used to prevent infection after exposure to measles in some high-risk individuals.

For questions or concerns about the measles vaccination, please consult your doctor or healthcare team.

Additional information

For specific questions regarding childhood vaccinations, including the MMR vaccine, or to make an appointment with a pediatric provider, please contact Mount Nittany Physician Group Pediatrics:

Mount Nittany Health - Bellefonte
129 Medical Park Lane
Bellefonte, PA 16823
814.355.3626

Mount Nittany Health - Boalsburg
3901 South Atherton Street
State College, PA 16801
814.466.7921

Resources
1. CDC ARTICLE: http://1.usa.gov/1DC9KTk
2. MAYO CLINIC ARTICLE: http://mayocl.in/1u32tfc
3. WEBMD ARTICLE: http://bit.ly/1EDL4NR
4. CDC ADULT VACCINE SCHEDULE: http://ow.ly/IOlwT