

Addressing Schools' and Parents' Concerns about Measles

February 4, 2015

1. What is measles?

Measles, also known as rubeola, is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. The disease of measles and the virus that causes it share the same name.

2. How does measles spread?

The measles virus lives in the mucus in the nose and throat of the infected person. When that person sneezes or coughs, droplets spray into the air. The droplets can get into other people's noses or throats when they breathe or put their fingers in their mouth or nose after touching an infected surface. The virus can live on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours.

Measles is highly contagious and can be spread to others from 4 days before to 4 days after the rash appears. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune (vaccinated) will also become infected with the measles virus.

3. What are the symptoms of measles?

The symptoms of measles generally begin about 7 to 14 days after a person is infected. A typical case of measles begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik's spots) may appear inside the mouth.

Three to five days after the start of symptoms, a red or reddish-brown rash appears. The rash usually begins on a person's face at the hairline and spreads downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. When the rash appears, a person's fever may spike to more than 104° Fahrenheit.

After a few days, the fever subsides and the rash fades.

4. How is measles treated?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Since it is caused by a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Treatment is usually supportive, like giving fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol, rest, and drinking plenty of fluids. Aspirin should not be given to children under 16 years of age.

5. Does measles pose a health risk to Monterey County?

Individuals who are not vaccinated against measles are at higher risk of getting measles. California is currently experiencing an increase in measles cases. Since late December of 2014, there have been 92 confirmed cases of measles among California residents.



Key Messages:

- Measles is a very contagious disease passed through the air.
- Two doses of measles-containing vaccine are more than 99% effective in preventing measles.
- The measles vaccine is safe.
- Unvaccinated individuals are urged to consider vaccination at this time.

Who to contact for more information?

Monterey County Health Department
831-755-4521

www.mtyhd.org

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/measles



A Measles Reference for Schools and Parents in Monterey County

6. How can I keep from getting measles?

The measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR) is the best way to protect against getting measles. Children should be given the first dose of MMR vaccine soon after the first birthday (12 to 15 months of age). The second dose is recommended before the start of the kindergarten. Adults at increased risk of getting measles — college students, international travelers and healthcare workers — should make sure they have been vaccinated against measles.

7. Is measles a serious disease?

About 1 out of 10 children with measles also gets an ear infection, and up to 1 out of 20 gets pneumonia. About 1 out of 1,000 gets meningitis (inflammation of the brain), and 1 or 2 out of 1,000 die. Measles can also make a pregnant woman have a miscarriage or give birth prematurely.

8. What should schools do if they suspect there is someone ill with measles?

Isolate the person in a room away from other people and notify his/her parents. Call the Monterey County Health Department at 831-755-4521. Public health workers will assist schools in assessing the individual's risk of having measles by asking questions about their vaccination status and symptoms. They will also provide guidance on any next steps that should be taken. If the individual is critically ill (for example, having trouble breathing), call 9-1-1 and provide as much information as possible.

9. What should parents do if they suspect their child is ill with measles?

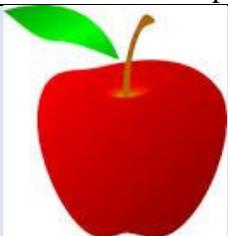
Contact your medical provider immediately if you or your child experiences the symptoms of measles. The ill person should not go into public places including work, school, daycare, grocery store, etc. If the individual needs medical treatment, call ahead so that steps can be taken before your arrival to make sure that other individuals are not exposed to the virus.

10. Should I get another measles vaccine if I am already vaccinated against measles?

At this time, health officials do not recommend additional doses of measles vaccine for most previously immunized people. Individuals who are employed in areas where they could potentially pass measles to children too young to be vaccinated or to people with weakened immune systems may consider a second dose of MMR vaccine if they have only had one dose in the past. Children who are being vaccinated on the recommended schedule (first dose between 12 and 15 months of age and second dose before kindergarten) should continue being vaccinated at the recommended intervals.

11. Will schools be alerted if a measles case is confirmed in Monterey County?

Yes. The Monterey County Health Department will notify schools, local medical providers, and the public if an individual is confirmed to have measles in Monterey County. The Monterey County Health Department will also provide information about any risk to schools and the public at that time. The Health Department will guide schools and parents on any actions they may need to take.



Where can schools and parents go for more information?

Monterey County Health Department Communicable Disease Unit

831-755-4521

www.mtyhd.org

Information on Measles

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/measles

