

Measles

Overview:

- Measles is a contagious viral disease that usually affects children.
- The patient can transmit the virus during the incubation period (before the onset of symptoms).
- Measles can be diagnosed by a distinguished rash, and the appearance of white spots inside the mouth on the lining of the cheek.
- There is no treatment that can get rid of measles after infection.
- The best way to prevent measles is to receive a triple viral vaccine.

Definition of measles:

A highly contagious viral disease that often affects children and can cause very serious complications.

Other Names:

red measles.

Causes:

It occurs due to the transmission of measles virus to the body.

Incubation Period:

For 10-12 days from exposure to the virus, after which measles symptoms begin to appear.

Modes of Transmission:

The virus lives in the nose and throat of the infected person, so it is transmitted to others by a spray of cough or sneezing with the virus. It can also land on surfaces and keep the virus active (infectious) for up to two hours. Thus, a healthy person can acquire infection by touching those contaminated surfaces and then touching the mouth, nose or rubbing the eye.

The virus can be transmitted to others from the beginning of the incubation period to the fourth day of the appearance of the rash.

Risk factors:

- Not taking measles vaccine.
- Weak immunity.
- Vitamin A deficiency
- Traveling to measles-endemic countries.

Phases and symptoms:

Infection occurs in successive stages over a period of two to three weeks:

The appearance of undefined signs and symptoms:

Measles usually begins with mild to moderate fever, often accompanied by a persistent cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis and throat, and these symptoms can last for two to three days.

Severe illness and skin rash stage:

The rash begins with small red spots that start to appear in the face, especially behind the ears and on the hairline, then begins to spread in the arms and trunk and then over the thighs to reach the legs and feet, to cover most areas of the body. During this stage of spreading body temperature rises sharply, reaching 40-41 ° C.

The rash gradually fades starting from the face to the thighs and feet.

When to see a doctor?

When exposed to an infected person or the appearance of a rash, as well as when suspecting symptoms.

Complications:

- Middle ear inflammation (the most common).
- Diarrhea.
- Pneumonia.
- Encephalitis.
- Pregnancy complications: Abortion or premature delivery
- Low platelet count (thrombocytopenia).

Diagnosis:

- **Clinical examination.** A doctor can usually diagnose measles based on the distinguished rash of the disease, as well as the appearance of small bluish white spots inside the mouth on the lining of the cheek called (Koplik spots).
- **Laboratory tests:** A blood test can be done to confirm whether the rash is actually measles.

Treatment:

There is no specific drug that treats measles, but its symptoms can be alleviated by taking some measures including:

- **Post infection vaccine:** The vaccine can be taken within 72 hours of exposure to measles for those who have not previously been vaccinated.
- **Serum immunoglobulin:** An injection of proteins (antibodies) given within six days of exposure to the virus.
- Drinking plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Lowering the lights and closing the curtains to reduce the eye sensitivity to light.
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The following medications may be prescribed for measles:

- Antipyretic.
- Antibiotics (in case of bacterial infection such as pneumonia or otitis).

- Vitamin A supplements to reduce the symptoms and complications of measles.

Prevention:

- The best way to prevent measles is to receive the triple viral vaccine, a routine vaccination given to children.
- Keep the infected away from the healthy people until they recover, to prevent infection.

Vaccine:

- In general, a person is considered safe if he or she has previously had the disease, and the vaccine is usually given as a community immunization for measles, mumps and rubella (triple viral vaccine). Two doses of the vaccine are recommended before the child starts school:
- The first dose is given at the age of 12 months and the second at the age of 18 months.

Contraindications to the triple viral vaccine:

- Pregnant women or women planning to become pregnant within the next four weeks.
- People who are highly sensitive to gelatin or neomycin antibiotic.
- People with very weak immune systems, or who take oral steroids.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Has measles and rubella been eliminated in Saudi Arabia?**
They will be completely eliminated by 2020.
- **What is the difference between measles and rubella?**
Rubella symptoms are usually less severe than measles and go away within 3 days. If a pregnant woman develops rubella during pregnancy, the fetus may be exposed to congenital rubella syndrome.
- **Is there a link between measles vaccine, rubella, mumps (triple viral vaccine) and childhood autism?**
According to studies, there is no link between the viral triple vaccine and autism.

Clinical Health Education Department

For further questions kindly contact us via email:

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