

# Measles contact information

Information for contacts of a measles case

**OFFICIAL**

## What is measles?

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness. People generally develop symptoms of measles 7 to 18 days after being in contact with an infectious person.

The first symptoms of a measles infection include:

- fever ( $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ )
- cough
- runny nose
- sore red eyes
- tiredness

A blotchy red rash appears about three to four days later (with fever present), usually starting on the face before spreading to the body. The rash generally lasts four to seven days. People with measles can become very unwell and often require hospitalisation.

## How is measles spread?

Measles is usually spread through breathing in droplets containing virus that have been coughed or sneezed into the air by an infectious person. It can also be spread through direct contact with secretions from the nose or throat of an infectious person. Measles is easily spread, and the virus can persist in the environment for 30 minutes.

## How long does a person remain infectious?

People with measles are infectious 24 hours before the first symptoms begin, until four days after the rash appears.

## How long will it take before I become unwell?

If you are not immune, the time from exposure to becoming unwell is usually about 10 days but can range from 7 to 18 days. The rash usually appears 14 days after exposure.

## Am I susceptible to measles?

If you have documented evidence of measles illness in the past or a record of two vaccinations against measles, you are considered immune (have protection against measles).

Susceptible (at risk) contacts include:

- Children <18 months of age who are too young to have received two doses of a measles vaccine
- Children  $\geq 18$  months of age without documented evidence of having received two doses of a measles vaccine

- Adults born during or after 1966 without documented evidence of having received two doses of a measles vaccine
- Anyone who is IgG negative for measles on serology, regardless of vaccination history
- People who are immunocompromised (e.g., cancer, receiving chemotherapy or high-dose steroids)

Anyone with documented evidence of previous measles infection is considered immune.

## What if I am unsure of my vaccination status?

The Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) is a national register that records vaccines given to all people in Australia. You can access your AIR vaccination record via your Medicare online account linked to your myGOV account. If you were born prior to 1996, all your vaccinations may not be listed on AIR. You can contact your general practitioner (GP) or local council to determine if they have your vaccination record (if you were vaccinated by them).

## What can I do to avoid getting measles?

If you have been in contact with someone with confirmed measles and you are susceptible to measles, you may be able to reduce the risk of becoming infected. The time since your contact will determine the appropriate action. Discuss your options with your GP as soon as possible. Below are the possible actions:

### Within 3 days (or 72 hours) of first contact

You can receive a free measles vaccine (except if you are pregnant, immunocompromised, allergic to the vaccine or aged less than 6 months).

### Within 6 days (144 hours) of first contact

Babies, pregnant women, immunocompromised people, and close personal contacts (who are out of time to receive a measles vaccine) can receive an immunoglobulin injection, which is sourced from blood donations. Be aware that this may not completely prevent you from developing measles but may reduce the severity of illness if you do develop measles.

### Six or more days after first contact

The time to receive appropriate post-exposure protection has elapsed. If you think you may be susceptible to measles, discuss this with your GP as soon as possible. Monitor yourself for signs and symptoms of measles for 18 days after your contact with the case, as it may take up to 18 days for symptoms to develop. It is important to avoid contact with anyone who is susceptible to measles (e.g., babies less than 12 months of age, pregnant women, or immunocompromised people). We recommend avoiding all public spaces during this time to limit the potential spread to vulnerable Victorians. This means avoiding shopping centres, public transport, children's services centres, and similar places. If you are unable to avoid public spaces, please wear a mask.

## What do I do if I think I have measles?

If you develop any symptoms of measles, make an appointment with your GP. When booking, tell the practice you have been exposed to a confirmed measles case, currently have symptoms, and need to be isolated on arrival. Wear a mask to your appointment and take this information sheet with you. If possible, ask for a home visit or to be seen in the carpark.

You might need to go to a hospital if you are very unwell. Call the Emergency Department prior to your arrival to tell them that you have been in contact with a confirmed case of measles, currently have symptoms and

need to be isolated on arrival. Wear a mask when you attend and tell the triage nurse when you arrive that you may have measles and should be isolated.

You can also call your local public health unit for advice. You can find contact information for your local public health unit at:

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/local-public-health-units>

## **What tests will my doctor do?**

The most common tests your doctor will consider are a blood sample to check for antibodies (immunity) and a nose or throat swab, or a urine sample to check for the presence of the measles virus.

## **I am pregnant, what should I do?**

Contact your GP or obstetrician and discuss whether you are susceptible to measles. Pregnant women who become infected with measles can be at risk of more severe illness, potential miscarriage, early delivery or stillbirth. Measles virus is not known to cause birth defects in babies. Susceptible pregnant women who are contacts of a case of measles can receive immunoglobulin (up to six days after first contact) to help protect them from becoming unwell.

## **Further information**

For further information contact your GP or Local Public Health Unit.

To receive this document in another format, phone 1300 651 160, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [infectious.diseases@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:infectious.diseases@health.vic.gov.au)

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