

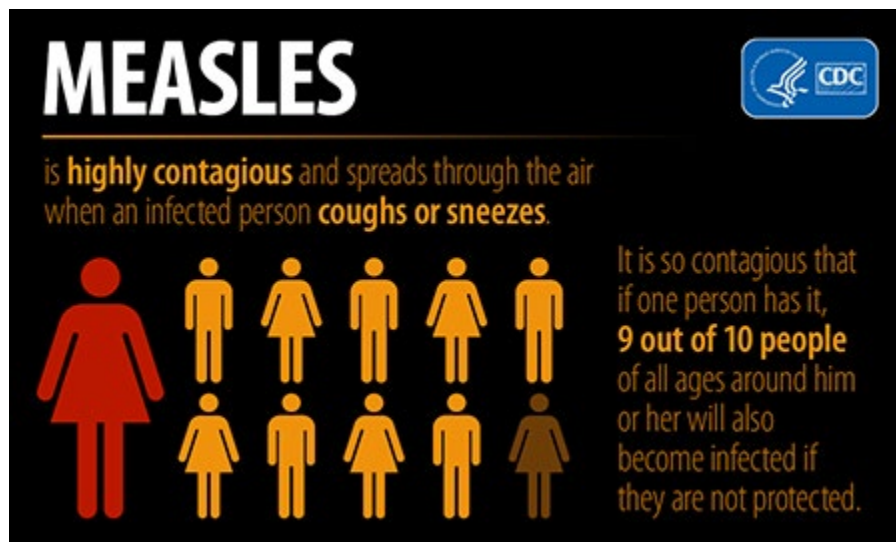
## Diseases Fact Sheet - Measles

### South Dakota Department of Health

**Office of Disease Prevention Services - 605-773-3737 -(1-800-592-1861 in South Dakota only)**

This material is provided for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical care. We are not able to answer personal medical questions. Please see your health care provider concerning appropriate care, treatment or other medical advice.

### What is it?



Measles is an acute, highly contagious viral disease capable of producing epidemics. Measles is more common in winter and spring.

### Who gets measles?

Although measles is usually considered a childhood disease, it can be contracted at any age. Generally, preschool children, adolescents, young adults and inadequately immunized individuals comprise the majority of measles cases in the United States.

### How is measles spread?

Measles is spread by direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected people or, less frequently, by airborne transmission. Measles is one of the most readily transmitted communicable diseases.

### What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles symptoms generally appear in two stages. In the first stage, the individual may have a runny nose, cough and a slight fever. The eyes may become reddened and sensitive to light while the fever consistently rises each day. The second stage begins on the third to seventh day and consists of a temperature of 103-105°F, and a red blotchy rash lasting four to seven days. The rash usually begins on the face and then spreads over the entire body. Koplik spots (little white spots with a red background) may also appear on the gums and inside of the cheeks.

### **How soon do symptoms appear?**

Early symptoms like fever usually appear 10 days after exposure (range 7-12 days) and rash appears after 14 days (range 7-21 days).

### **When and for how long is a person able to spread measles?**

An individual is able to transmit measles from four days before onset of rash and until four days after rash onset.

### **Does past infection make a person immune?**

Yes. Permanent immunity is acquired after contracting the disease.

### **What is the treatment for measles?**

There is no specific treatment for measles.

### **What are the complications associated with measles?**

Pneumonia occurs in up to 6 percent of reported cases and accounts for 60 percent of deaths attributed to measles. Encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) may also occur. Other complications include middle ear infection and convulsions. Measles is more severe in infants and adults.

### **How can measles be prevented?**

Maintaining the highest level of immunization against measles is the best preventive measure. Measles vaccine (MMR) may be given at 12-15 months of age. The second dose of MMR is given at 4-6 years of age. The vaccine is highly effective and two MMR shots usually produce lifelong immunity.

### **[Learn About Immunizations in South Dakota](#)**

#### **Related Sites:**

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)



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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - [Vaccines and Immunizations](#)
  - [Facts about Measles](#)
  - [Parents Guide to Childhood Immunizations](#)
- [South Dakota Department of Health, Immunization Program](#)