

7 common symptoms of measles, and 1 pretty sure way to avoid it

February 5 2015, by Aileen M. Marty, M.d.



Measles is nothing to "sneeze at"—it can be deadly.

The [measles virus](#) is spread through the air by breathing, coughing or sneezing, and it is probably the most highly contagious infectious disease in humans. In fact, it's possible for someone who is contagious to sneeze or cough inside a room, leave, and two hours later for someone else to enter that room and become infected.

The World Health Organization's latest figures (for 2013) report 145,000

deaths worldwide. That's about 400 deaths every day, or 16 deaths per hour. Here in the United States we thought we had measles licked when it was officially eradicated back in 2000, but it's making a comeback.

Last year 644 cases, the first month of this year, 100 cases and growing by the day.

Contacts of measles cases being followed in Florida

The Florida Department of Health says it is monitoring individuals who may have been in contact with four people with measles who visited our state in the past two weeks. Two of those visitors were international tourists. The worst of this year's outbreak started in California's Disneyland most likely, according to the Centers for Disease Control, carried by either a foreign tourist or an American who brought the virus from the Philippines.

Seven common symptoms

1. Fever
2. Cough
3. Runny nose
4. Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
5. Feeling run down, achy (malaise)
6. Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth (Koplik's spots)
7. Blotchy rash

The measles' telltale rash is usually the last of the symptoms to appear, but you can be contagious from 3-4 days before the rash becomes visible and up to 4-6 days after the rash appears. The rash usually lasts about a week.

How to avoid measles

Get vaccinated. The [measles vaccine](#) is safe and effective. It is usually given as a combination measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Always discuss vaccinations with your doctor.

Common measles complications

- Ear infections
- Diarrhea
- Croup
- Pneumonia

Rare and sometimes deadly complications

- Myocarditis-inflammation of the heart
- Encephalitis-inflammation of the brain
- Subacute sclerosing panencephalitis- the measles virus remains in the body, and years after the patients seems to have fully recovered from [measles](#) can cause bizarre behavior, dementia, seizures, coma, and death.

Why risk it? Take the shot.

Provided by Florida International University

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