

# Protecting Yourself from Measles



Measles cases are on the rise in many states across the country. Learn more about the disease and the actions you should take to protect yourself. This guidance is for adults who want to protect themselves against measles.

## What is Measles?

Measles is a highly contagious disease that infects the lungs and breathing passages like the nose, mouth, and throat, and spreads throughout the body. Anyone can contract measles.

Measles symptoms can include a rash all over the body, coughing, high fevers, diarrhea, a runny nose, and eye and ear infections. At its most severe, measles can cause brain swelling, hearing loss, and death.

## Why Get Vaccinated?

The only way to prevent measles and its complications is by getting the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. The MMR vaccine is both safe and highly effective. Research shows that individuals who have received the full series of MMR vaccines are 97% protected and are unlikely to contract measles.



### **FACT: Vitamin A does not prevent measles.**

While there are some benefits to taking vitamin A, large doses can lead to toxicity, which means it can become poisonous. Large doses of vitamin A can also lead to nausea, vomiting, headache, fatigue, joint and bone pain, blurry vision, liver damage, confusion, coma, and other complications. The only way to prevent measles is by getting the MMR vaccine.

## Check Your Protection Status

For most people, the best way to confirm whether you're protected against measles is by reviewing your medical records. If you're having trouble locating evidence from a healthcare professional that you had measles and/or received the MMR or measles-mumps-rubella-varicella (MMRV)<sup>1</sup> vaccine, ask family members who may have documentation of your childhood medical history. You can also check with schools you attended, past employers, and doctors or health clinics you previously visited. Your state's health department may also maintain a registry of adult vaccine records.

Use the chart on the next page to determine what actions you should take to protect yourself against measles, based on your vaccination status and measles history.

Status	Action
I have documentation from a healthcare professional that I received two doses of the MMR or MMRV vaccine. <sup>1</sup>	→ No action needed.
I have documentation from a healthcare professional that I had measles previously.  I was born before 1957. <sup>2</sup>	→ You are considered to be immune to measles. However, if you are part of one of the groups listed below, <sup>3</sup> you should talk to a healthcare professional about testing your immunity and possibly getting a dose of the vaccine. <sup>4</sup>
I have documentation from a healthcare professional that I received one dose of the MMR or MMRV vaccine.	→ <u>1 dose provides ~93% protection against measles, which is considered sufficient.</u> However, you should consider getting a second dose especially if you are a part of one of the groups listed below. <sup>3</sup>
I have never received the MMR or MMRV vaccine.	→ Talk to a healthcare professional about receiving at least one dose of the MMR vaccine as soon as possible.
I can't locate my vaccination records, and I don't know whether I was ever vaccinated or had measles.	→ Talk to a healthcare professional about testing your measles immunity and possibly getting a dose of the MMR vaccine. <sup>4</sup>

1. The MMRV vaccine provides safe and effective protection against measles, but it is only administered to people ages 12 months through 12 years. If you need to get vaccinated against measles as an adult, you will receive the MMR vaccine.
2. People born before 1957 were most likely exposed to measles before the vaccine was available and are considered to have immunity.

3. You should have two doses of the vaccine if you are:
  - A healthcare worker
  - A close contact of someone with a compromised immune system
  - A student at a post-high school educational institution
  - Living with HIV
  - Traveling internationally

If you live in or are traveling to an area with a measles outbreak, check the local and state health departments' additional vaccine recommendations for at-risk groups.

4. It is safe to receive another dose of the MMR vaccine, even if you may have received one or two earlier in your life.

## What To Do if You've Been Exposed to Measles or Are Experiencing Symptoms



### If you have not been vaccinated against measles or don't know your vaccination status:

Contact a healthcare professional immediately and alert them that you believe you were exposed to measles. Ask them about receiving an MMR vaccine and discuss what measures you should take to keep yourself and others safe. You should isolate for 21 days after your exposure, wear a mask, and disinfect surfaces when near others to avoid the spread of germs in the air and on common household items.



### If you have been vaccinated against measles:

Contact a healthcare professional immediately and alert them that you believe you were exposed to measles. Discuss your vaccine history and the measures you should take to keep yourself and others safe. You should isolate to limit contact with others until it is confirmed you do not have measles. If you develop a measles rash and/or test positive for measles, you may be advised to stay home for four days. You should wear a mask and disinfect surfaces when near others to avoid the spread of germs in the air and on common household items.

## SOURCES

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