



MESA COUNTY  
PUBLIC HEALTH

# measles: What parents need to know

***Mesa County Public Health is partnering with local schools and childcare facilities to provide accurate information about measles. Below are frequently asked questions about measles, prevention, and the impacts if you or your child is exposed to the virus.***

## **What is measles?**

- Measles is a viral respiratory illness spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Symptoms appear seven to 14 days after contact with the virus, and can include a high fever, cough, runny nose, and watery eyes.
- Three to five days after symptoms start, a rash breaks out at the hairline and spreads downward.
- The best protection against measles is the Measles Mumps Rubella, or MMR vaccine. It is safe and 97% effective at preventing infection after the second dose.

## **Why is there concern?**

- It is so contagious that if one person has measles, 9 out of 10 will become infected if they are not protected, meaning not vaccinated or previously infected with the measles.
- This illness can be dangerous, especially for children under 5 years old. Some people may suffer from severe complications, such as pneumonia and encephalitis, which is the swelling of the brain.

## **What if my child tests positive for measles?**

- Regardless of your child's MMR vaccination status, **your child must stay home for at least four full days after rash onset if they test positive for measles.**
- We also recommend that the child attempt to isolate themselves and wear a well-fitting mask around others in the home.
- Consult with your healthcare provider if you or someone in your family has had an exposure to measles and are not protected by the measles vaccine. Certain age groups or medical conditions might have additional recommended post exposure treatments.

## **What if my child was exposed to measles and is *UP-TO-DATE* on MMR vaccinations?**

- To be considered up-to-date, children between the ages of one and four years must have received their first MMR dose, and then received their second MMR dose between the ages of four to six.
- Children older than six must have two doses of the MMR vaccine to be considered fully vaccinated.
- Your child may return to school and activities and **does not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms.**
- Watch for symptoms in your child for at least 21 days after their last close contact with someone with measles.

- If your child develops symptoms, they should isolate immediately at home, get tested, contact Mesa County Public Health and your healthcare provider, **stay home until the results are known**, and wear a well-fitting mask around others in the household.

### **What if my child was exposed to measles and is *NOT UP-TO-DATE* on MMR vaccinations, or not vaccinated?**

- If your child has only received one dose of the MMR vaccine or is unvaccinated, then they are considered not to be up-to-date.
- **Your child may be required to quarantine at home for up to 21 days after their last exposure to measles.**
- They should wear a well-fitting mask when they are around others in their home.
- It is possible for your exposed child to receive a post-exposure dose of the MMR vaccine. This can eliminate the need for your child to quarantine and isolate, but it must be given within 72 hrs of exposure.
- If your child develops symptoms, they should isolate immediately at home, get tested, contact your healthcare provider and Mesa County Public Health, stay home until the results are known, and wear a well-fitting mask around others in the household.

### **What if a household member tests positive for measles and lives in the same household as a school-aged child?**

- If your child is **fully vaccinated** and not showing symptoms, they may return to school.
- You will need to monitor for symptoms for 21 days, and if symptoms develop, your child will need to quarantine and contact public health immediately.
- If your child is **not vaccinated**, they may be required to quarantine at home for up to 21 days after their last exposure to measles.
- If your child develops symptoms, they should isolate immediately at home, get tested, contact your healthcare provider and Mesa County Public Health, stay home until the results are known, and wear a well-fitting mask around others in the household.

### **How can I help prevent my child from getting measles?**

- Assure that your child is up-to-date, or fully vaccinated, for measles by ensuring that by the age of six, they have received two doses of MMR vaccine.
- You can also check the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment website](#) to see the vaccination rate of your school or childcare to help determine the risk of being exposed to measles due to low vaccination rates. An MMR vaccination rate of 95% is required to reduce the risk of measles outbreaks.

### **Why is it important for me and my child to get vaccinated for measles?**

- Measles is highly contagious and can lead to lifelong complications, including death.
- Receiving two doses of the MMR vaccine is 97% effective at preventing illness and is proven safe.

- Maintaining a community-wide vaccination rate of 95% is essential for limiting the risk of measles outbreaks occurring locally.
- This is important to help protect our healthcare capacity as well as the ability for our schools and childcares to stay open.
- Vaccination is the only way to prevent quarantine for 21 days if someone is exposed.

### **What services are available at Mesa County Public Health?**

- We offer the MMR vaccine in our Public Health Clinic. Call 970-248-6906 to make an appointment.
- If you have questions about the measles virus or the MMR vaccine, call us at 970-248-6900.

### **What is Mesa County Public Health doing to stay proactive?**

- Our disease surveillance team and our partners at Colorado Public Health and Environment are working closely to help prevent further spread of measles.
- Our team is talking to people who may have been exposed through contact tracing. We help them get what they need to stay safe and prevent measles from spreading to others.
- We support the community in monitoring and responding to infectious diseases. Measles is just one of them that we monitor. We will continue to notify the community if there are additional confirmed cases.