

ASK THE NURSE



MEASLES

June 2025

Measles was eliminated in the United States in 2000, and currently in the US we now have 1,024 confirmed cases, with 3 deaths, 2 unvaccinated children and one unvaccinated adult, in 31 jurisdictions, Texas being most of the cases in the US, these cases primarily have affected 95% of unvaccinated people. So far, there are no confirmed cases in Massachusetts, but there are confirmed cases in nearby states, NJ, NYC, VT, and RI.

What is measles?

Measles is caused by a virus, spread through the air after a person coughs or sneezes, and land on surfaces. This virus is so highly contagious that it can last up to 2 hours after the infected person leaves the room! This is not a new virus, it is noted to be an ancient disease, this virus appeared in the early 9th century, according to the World Health Organization history on measles. The measles vaccine was developed in 1957, and in 1965 & 68 the vaccine was licensed, and in 1971 the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccines were combined.

Symptoms:

After exposure to this virus, measles symptoms start to appear about 7-14 days with a cough, runny nose, high fever, diarrhea, and conjunctivitis (red watery eyes) then about 3-5 days, or up to 14 days later a red, blotchy, rash appears, starting at the face, and spreads down the body to the chest & limbs. Up to 3 days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots inside the mouth appear, called Koplik spots. 1 out of 5 people will be hospitalized per CDC.

Complications:

Ear infections and Diarrhea are the most common side effects. But complications can be more serious with children under the age of 5, pregnant women, adults and immunocompromised people. Severe complications may include pneumonia, encephalitis, and death.

Vaccine:

Getting the 2 doses of the Measles, Mumps, & Rubella, MMR vaccine is the best way to protect against measles and/or getting the MMRV which adds varicella (chickenpox) as a preventative measure from getting these diseases. The MMR vaccine is 97% effective with 2-doses!

- Measles- a virus-cause a rash and high fever
- Mumps-virus- cause swollen glands and fever (affects the salivary, or parotid glands on each side of the face)
- Rubella (German Measles) viral infection-causes a rash and fever, very dangerous for pregnant women (like measles but different virus)

Westford data reflects greater than 97-99% children are vaccinated with MMR from grades K-12



Resources:

- Photos of Measles May 23, 2024, downloaded picture from CDC page “Child with a classic measles rash after four days” <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/signs-symptoms/photos.html>
- World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/history-of-vaccination/history-of-measles-vaccination>
- CDC 2025: https://www.cdc.gov/measles/data-research/index.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_10-measles-cases-in-2025
- Mayo Clinic Apr 23, 2025: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/measles/symptoms-causes/syc-20374857>
- Measles 1963: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/history-disease-outbreaks-vaccine-timeline/measles>
- About Measles May 29, 2024: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/about/index.html>
- CDC January 17, 2025: https://www.cdc.gov/measles/vaccines/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fvaccines%2Fvaccine%2Fmumps%2Fpublic%2Findex.html
- Mayo Clinic Mumps Nov 23, 2022: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mumps/symptoms-causes/syc-20375361>
- 2024-2025 grade K, grade 7, grade 12 DATA Mass.gov School Immunizations <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/school-immunizations#school-immunization-data->

*The information above was taken from various sources, to explain the measles virus. This information is meant to be truthful, accurate, & educational and not meant to misrepresent any article previously written and submitted.

Respectively submitted by, <https://westfordcat.org/2025/06/ask-the-nurse-measles-june-2025/>

Gail Johnson, Public Health Nurse

Westford Health Department