About Measles

Measles is a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person. It can spread to others through coughing and sneezing. Measles virus can live for up to two hours in an airspace where the infected person coughed or sneezed. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch an infected surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.

Measles Vaccination

The measles vaccine is very effective. One dose of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is about 93% effective at preventing measles if exposed to the virus. Two doses are about 97% effective. Very few people—about three out of 100—who get two doses of measles vaccine will still get measles if exposed to the virus. Experts aren’t sure why. But the good news is, fully vaccinated people who get measles are much more likely to have a milder illness and are also less likely to spread the disease to other people.

Measles Immunity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers you protected from measles if you have written documentation showing at least one of the following:

- You received two doses of measles-containing vaccine, and you are a(n)—
  - school-aged child (grades K-12)
  - adult who will be in a setting that poses a high risk for measles transmission, including students at post-high school education institutions, healthcare personnel, and international travelers.
- You received one dose of measles-containing vaccine, and you are a(n)—
  - preschool-aged child
  - adult who will not be in a high-risk setting for measles transmission.
- A laboratory confirmed that you had measles at some point in your life.
- A laboratory confirmed that you are immune to measles.
- You were born in the United States before 1957.

If you’re unsure whether you’re immune to measles, you should first try to find your vaccination records or documentation of measles immunity. If you do not have written documentation of measles immunity, you should get vaccinated with measles-mumps-
rubella (MMR) vaccine. Another option is to have a health care provider test your blood to determine whether you’re immune. But this option is likely to cost more and will take two office visits. There is no harm in getting another dose of MMR vaccine if you may already be immune to measles (or mumps or rubella).

**Special circumstances**

1. If you received a measles vaccine in the 1960s, you may or may not need to be revaccinated. People who have documentation of receiving **LIVE** measles vaccine in the 1960s do not need to be revaccinated. People who were vaccinated prior to 1968 with either inactivated (killed) measles vaccine or measles vaccine of unknown type should be revaccinated with at least one dose of live attenuated measles vaccine. This recommendation is intended to protect those who may have received killed measles vaccine, which was available in 1963-1967 and was not effective.

2. Before any international travel—
   a. Infants 6 months through 11 months of age should receive one dose of MMR vaccine. Infants who get one dose of MMR vaccine before their first birthday should get two more doses (one dose at 12 through 15 months of age and another dose at least 28 days later).
   b. Children 12 months of age and older should receive two doses of MMR vaccine separated by at least 28 days.
   c. Teenagers and adults who do not have evidence of immunity against measles should get two doses of MMR vaccine separated by at least 28 days.

*The CDC and Massachusetts Department of Public Health do not currently have special recommendations for measles vaccination related to domestic travel or for people who are part of a specific community such as Orthodox Jewish.*

*As of April 17, 2019, there are CDC travel health notices for current measles outbreaks for the following countries: Israel, Philippines, Brazil, Japan, Ukraine*

3. Some people should not get MMR vaccine or should wait. Tell your vaccine provider if the person getting the vaccine:
   a. Has any severe, life-threatening allergies. A person who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of MMR vaccine, or has a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, may be advised not to be vaccinated. Ask your health care provider if you want information about vaccine components.
   b. Is pregnant or thinks she might be pregnant. Pregnant women should wait to get MMR vaccine until after they are no longer pregnant. Women should avoid getting pregnant for at least 1 month after getting MMR vaccine.
   c. Has a weakened immune system due to disease (such as cancer or HIV/AIDS) or medical treatments (such as radiation, immunotherapy, steroids, or chemotherapy).
d. Has a parent, brother, or sister with a history of immune system problems.
e. Has ever had a condition that makes them bruise or bleed easily.
f. Has recently had a blood transfusion or received other blood products. You might be advised to postpone MMR vaccination for 3 months or more.
g. Has tuberculosis.
h. Has gotten any other vaccines in the past 4 weeks. Live vaccines given too close together might not work as well.
i. Is not feeling well. A mild illness, such as a cold, is usually not a reason to postpone a vaccination. Someone who is moderately or severely ill should probably wait. Your doctor can advise you.

Where to get the measles vaccine in Newton

Most health insurance plans cover vaccines – check with your plan if you have coverage questions. If you need the MMR vaccine and you are unable to get it through your primary care provider, you may be able to get it at the following places (this is not an exhaustive list):

1. Keyes Drug: 617-244-2794 https://dinnovehealth.com/keyesdrug
2. CVS Minute Clinic: 617-244-0821
3. Walgreens: 617-658-6421

The Newton Health and Human Services Department does not currently provide the MMR vaccine.

What to do if you are exposed to measles, or think you might be sick with measles

Measles symptoms

The symptoms of measles generally appear about seven to 14 days after a person is infected. Measles typically begins with

- high fever,
- cough,
- runny nose, and
- red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis).

Two or three days after symptoms begin, tiny white spots (Koplik spots) may appear inside the mouth.

Three to five days after symptoms begin, a rash breaks out. It usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face at the hairline and spread downward to the neck, trunk, arms, legs, and feet. Small raised bumps may also appear on top of the flat red spots. The spots may
become joined together as they spread from the head to the rest of the body. When the rash appears, a person’s fever may spike to more than 104° Fahrenheit.

If you think you’ve been exposed

If you think you’ve been exposed to someone who has measles, immediately call your health care provider and let them know that you have been exposed to someone who has measles. Your health care provider can

- determine if you are immune to measles based on your vaccination record, age, or laboratory evidence, and
- make special arrangements to evaluate you, if needed, without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.

If you are not immune to measles, MMR vaccine or a medicine called immune globulin may help reduce your risk developing measles. Your doctor can help to advise you and monitor you for signs and symptoms of measles.

If you do not get MMR or immune globulin, you should stay away from settings where there are susceptible people (such as school, hospital, or childcare) until your doctor says it’s okay to return. This will help ensure that you do not spread it to others.

If you think you have measles

If you think you have measles, immediately call your health care provider and let them know about your symptoms. Your health care provider can

- determine if you are immune to measles based on your vaccination record or if you had measles in the past, and
- make special arrangements to evaluate you, if needed, without putting other patients and medical office staff at risk.

Questions?

Newton Health and Human Services Department (617) 796-1420
Please call for assistance if you are having difficult locating or paying for a measles vaccine.