



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Measles

What is measles?

Measles is a highly contagious viral illness that can cause serious complications, especially in young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems. It spreads very easily through coughs and sneezes.

How measles spreads

- The measles virus is carried in tiny droplets in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- You can catch it by breathing in these droplets or touching a surface they have landed on and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Measles is **highly contagious** from **about 4 days before the rash appears until 4 days after it starts**.
- The **incubation period** (time from catching the virus to symptoms starting) is usually **10–12 days**.
- Children should stay away from school or nursery during this time to avoid passing it to others.

Symptoms to look out for

Measles often develops in stages:

1. Early stage (first 2–4 days)

- Fever (often high)
- Runny nose, sneezing
- Cough
- Red, sore eyes (conjunctivitis)
- General tiredness and feeling unwell
- Small white spots with a red background inside the mouth (Koplik spots) — may appear a day or two before the rash



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2. Rash stage

- Usually appears **3–5 days after symptoms start**
 - Starts on the face and behind the ears, then spreads to the rest of the body
 - Rash is red or reddish-brown, often blotchy, and may join together in places
 - Fever may rise further when the rash appears
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When to seek urgent medical help

Contact your GP or NHS 111 urgently if your child:

- Has difficulty breathing or is breathing fast
 - Has a seizure (fit)
 - Becomes very drowsy, confused, or unresponsive
 - Has persistent vomiting or is unable to drink
 - Develops severe ear pain, a stiff neck, or sensitivity to light
 - Has a fever that does not improve with paracetamol or ibuprofen (given at the correct dose)
 - Shows signs of dehydration (no wee for many hours, very dry mouth, no tears when crying)
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Caring for your child at home

- Keep them at home until **4 full days after the rash appears** to avoid spreading the infection.
 - Give plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
 - Use paracetamol or ibuprofen for fever or discomfort — follow the instructions for age and weight.
 - Keep the room well-lit but not glaring if their eyes are sensitive.
 - Avoid bright sunlight and smoky environments.
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Possible complications

While most children recover fully, measles can sometimes cause:

- Ear infections
- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Diarrhoea
- More rarely, brain inflammation (encephalitis)

Prevention

The best protection is the **MMR vaccine** (measles, mumps, and rubella). Two doses are needed for full protection. If your child has missed a dose, speak to your GP or practice nurse — it's never too late to catch up.

If you think your child might have measles, phone your GP or NHS 111 before visiting so arrangements can be made to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.

Enclosed is a link to further parent information:

Parent information on “My child is unwell – When should I see a doctor?”

<https://drwmuller.com/information-for-parents-carers/>

See: Emergencies: “When do I need to see a doctor urgently?”

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