

Health Tips for Parents

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How can I protect my child from measles?

Due to the recent outbreak of measles, parents should be reminded about the importance of getting the two-dose combined measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) immunization, which is given at 12-to-15 months of age and again at 4-to-6 years of age.



Measles is a highly contagious viral respiratory infection that is spread when someone comes in direct contact with infected droplets through the air, says James Cherry, MD, UCLA pediatric infectious diseases physician.



person should be closely watched since serious complications may arise, such as pneumonia, brain inflammation or death. Consult your physician as soon as you are aware or suspect that your child has been exposed to or has measles.

Because measles was so prevalent before the introduction of a vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) considers adults born prior to 1957 to be immune because of the likelihood they were exposed to the disease. Dr. Cherry advises that those born between 1947 and 1957 who do not have proof of immunity should be vaccinated per CDC guidelines, unless there is a medical contraindication to immunization. For all adults born in 1957 or later, the CDC recommends that they receive two doses of MMR vaccine.

The first symptoms of measles are similar to other illnesses, which start with high fever, coughing and red, watery eyes for about four days before developing the telltale red rash that typically is raised and running together, beginning on the face and spreading to the neck and the rest of the body. Symptoms usually last for about 11 days. A person is contagious from when symptoms start until about four days after the rash appears.

There is no specific medical treatment for measles. A person infected with measles is advised to stay home, away from other people and from direct sunlight, and to rest and drink plenty of fluids and eat a normal diet. Two doses of vitamin A are recommended. The infected

If the family is planning to travel to an area with endemic/epidemic measles, one dose of MMR should be given to infants over 6 months of age and under 12 months. Travel with infants under 6 months of age should be carefully considered and, if possible, discussed with a pediatric travel physician.

Vaccination Schedule

- All children (except those with a medical contraindication) should receive two doses of MMR vaccine
- First dose: 12-15 months of age
- Second dose: 4-6 years of age (may be given earlier, if at least 28 days after the first dose)



Prevention is important

Prevention is more important than treatment, advises Dr. Cherry. It is very important for children to get vaccinated according to the schedule prescribed by your doctor. If exposed and unvaccinated, a person should get vaccinated immediately or receive immune globulin to prevent infection or decrease severity of illness.

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