

Measles

Measles is an infection that **spreads very easily** and can cause serious problems in some people. Having the MMRV or MMR vaccine is the best way to prevent it. We have given you this leaflet because we suspect you or your child may have measles. We do not routinely perform blood tests or take swabs to diagnose measles as it is generally a self-limiting illness and we use the features below (rash, symptoms etc.) to help make the diagnosis. However, if a swab or blood test has been performed and is positive you may be contacted by the hospital or the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

It is very important that patients with suspected measles who are discharged home, go straight home and stay within their home. This is to help reduce the chance of infecting others.

Symptoms of measles

Measles usually starts with cold-like symptoms, followed by a rash a few days later. Some people may also get small spots in their mouth.

Cold-like symptoms: The first symptoms of measles include: a high temperature, a runny or blocked nose, sneezing, a cough, red, sore, watery eyes

Spots in the mouth: Small white spots may appear inside the cheeks and on the back of the lips a few days later. These spots usually last a few days.

The measles rash: A rash usually appears a few days after the cold-like symptoms. The rash starts on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body. The spots of the measles rash are sometimes raised and join together to form blotchy patches. They're not usually itchy. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

Vaccination or previous infection: It's unlikely to be measles if you've had both doses of the MMRV or MMR vaccine or if you've had measles before. However, this is not always the case.

How to look after yourself or your child

Measles usually starts to get better in about a week. It can help to:

- rest and drink plenty of fluids, such as water, to avoid dehydration
- give your child paracetamol if they're distressed or uncomfortable. Ibuprofen is also an option (if aged over 3 months) if paracetamol is not effective. However ibuprofen is best avoided if there is uncertainty about the diagnosis and chickenpox remains a possibility
- adults can take paracetamol or ibuprofen for a high temperature
- use cotton wool soaked in water that has been boiled and allowed to cool to gently remove any crusts from your or your child's eyes

Important:

- Stay off nursery, school or work for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears.
- Also try to avoid close contact with babies and anyone who is pregnant or has a weakened immune system.
- Where possible, self-isolate at home and avoid contact with others outside the household unless absolutely necessary.

How to avoid spreading or catching measles

- Measles is spread when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes.
- You're infectious from when you first have symptoms (around 4 days before the rash appears) until 4 days after you get the rash.

There are things you can do to reduce the risk of spreading or catching measles.

Do

- open windows and doors to help reduce the risk of measles spreading – only open the top window or use safety catches if you have young children
- wash your hands often with soap and warm water
- use tissues when you cough or sneeze and throw them in the bin immediately after using them

Don't

- do not share cutlery, cups, towels, clothes, or bedding

Problems that can be caused by measles include:

Measles can lead to serious problems if it spreads to other parts of the body, such as the lungs (pneumonia) or brain (meningitis, seizures or fits or blindness). These problems are rare, but some people are more at risk. This includes babies and people with weakened immune systems.

Measles in pregnancy

If you get measles when you're pregnant, it could harm your baby.

It can cause: miscarriage or stillbirth, premature birth (before the 37th week of pregnancy), your baby having a low birthweight.

It's important to get medical advice if you're pregnant and have been in close contact with someone who has measles.

Call 999 or return to the Emergency Department if you or your child has measles and:

- have a seizure (fit)
- have severe difficulty breathing – you're gasping, choking or not able to get words out (babies may make grunting noises or their stomach may suck under their ribcage)
- are unable to stay awake – cannot keep their eyes open for more than a few seconds
- suddenly become confused – your child may be very unsettled, behaving differently, or crying non-stop
- your child is limp, floppy or not responding normally – their head may fall to the side, backwards or forwards, or they may find it difficult to lift their head and focus on your face
- have a rash that does not fade when you press a glass against it
- have a stiff neck, or find light uncomfortable or painful

Get vaccinated against measles

The MMRV and MMR vaccines can prevent measles. The MMRV vaccine is offered to all young children in the UK. The MMR vaccine is recommended for adults and older children if they were not vaccinated when they were younger. Your GP can vaccinate you for free on the NHS.



Acknowledgements:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/> Accessed 10.06.2026
University Hospital of Leicester – suspected Measles in Children

If you need further advice, please contact the Emergency Department – details below
Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:
Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>
www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

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Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743