

# Measles outbreak: What you need to know

California is currently experiencing an outbreak of measles, a serious disease that had almost been eradicated until recently. We want to make sure you have access to important information about measles, and how to get the vaccine to prevent it.

## About measles

Measles is a highly contagious virus that lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person.

- Measles starts with a fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, and a sore throat. Those symptoms are followed by a rash that spreads all over the body.
- In many cases, people with measles can recover at home. However, measles can cause serious health complications in children younger than 5 years of age.

## How measles spreads

The measles virus can spread through coughing and sneezing.

- The virus can live for up to two hours on a surface or in the air where the infected person coughed or sneezed.
- After someone is exposed to measles, it usually takes between three and five days for a rash to appear. It usually begins as flat red spots that appear on the face and spread down to the neck, arms, legs, and feet.
- Infected people can spread measles to others from four days before and four days after the rash appears.

## Preventing measles

**The best way to prevent measles is to get immunized.** The MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine is very effective. It provides lifetime protection for 97% to 99% of people who receive two doses. The first measles shot is recommended when a child is 12 to 15 months old. The second shot is usually given between the ages of 4 and 6.

**Through your Blue Shield medical plan you have preventive care services that allow you and your family to receive the MMR vaccine.** To find out if you and your family are protected, please call your primary care physician. For more information on preventive care, visit the *Health & Wellness* section of our website at [blueshieldca.com](https://www.blueshieldca.com).

For details about your plan benefit coverage, please call the customer service number on the back of your Blue Shield member ID card or log in to the member center at [blueshieldca.com](https://www.blueshieldca.com).

[www.cdc.gov/measles/](https://www.cdc.gov/measles/)