

# MEASLES INFORMATION SHEET

## Definition, symptoms, spreading of the disease & prevention

### What is measles?

Measles is a globally distributed and highly contagious viral disease which should not be underestimated. Particularly in young children and adults the disease can often have a serious course. Sometimes, the body's immune system can be weakened for months or years making it more likely that otherwise harmless infections may have severe consequences.

The combined measles-mumps-rubella vaccine offers reliable protection from infection and transmission of the disease to other people. The vaccine requires two doses and is available free of charge for all age groups in Austria.

### What are the symptoms?

About 7 to 14 days after being exposed to the virus people usually show flu-like symptoms like a fever, cold, cough and conjunctivitis. About 4 days later a rash appears, which starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. Complications may include middle ear infection (otitis media), bronchitis, pneumonia or encephalitis. Very rarely, measles can cause a degenerative infection of the brain called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis or SSPE, which develops several years after infection and is always fatal.

### How does measles spread?

Measles is spread from person to person through the air by infectious droplets. Infected persons can pass on the virus through talking, coughing and sneezing. For persons who are exposed to the virus and are not protected by immunisation the risk of catching the disease is more than 90%. You can even pick up the virus when you enter a room where an infected person has recently been. Body fluids of an infected person can remain infectious on surfaces for up to two hours.

### Get vaccinated!

The only effective way of preventing measles and its transmission to other people is vaccination. The combined vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella is included in Austria's free vaccination programme. Children aged 9 months or over should receive two doses of the vaccine to ensure they are immune. Anyone who has missed vaccination can and should catch up on the vaccine at any age as quickly as possible. However, if you are pregnant or severely immunocompromised, you cannot receive the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine. The vaccine is available at doctors' surgeries and at the Town Town vaccination centre of the Public Health Services of the City of Vienna.

To book an appointment visit [impfservice.wien](https://www.wien.gv.at/impfservice) or call the health hotline at 1450.

Have you got any further questions on measles? The health hotline of the City of Vienna at **1450** is available every day around the clock.

# Guidelines for isolation at home

## You have measles or take care of someone with measles:

- People with measles are infectious from **about 4 days before** until **4 days after** the rash onset!
- During this time, they can easily pass on the virus to other people who have not been fully vaccinated or have not had the infection before. Therefore, stay away from other people in your home, i.e. stay in a separate room, if possible. Do not leave your home during this time, avoid contact with other people and do not receive visitors.
- You can leave your home for medical care when absolutely necessary, but make sure to wear an FFP2 mask. You should phone ahead to your doctor or health-care facility to let them know you have measles and are isolating at home, as hospitals, doctors' surgeries or patient transport services also need to take precautions to protect other people.

## You are or have been in close contact with someone who has measles:

- Measles is extremely **contagious**. For this reason, persons who have not been fully vaccinated or have not had the infection before and have been in close contact with someone who has measles are considered at-risk contacts. The first signs of measles can appear between 7 and 21 days after you are infected.
- Close contacts need to provide the health authority with proof of their **measles immunity**, either by providing proof of **2 measles vaccines** documented in their vaccine pass or through a **measles antibody blood test**.
- Close contacts who **cannot prove** their immunity are suspected to be infectious and need to **isolate** for 21 days, starting from the day of last contact with the infected person, as defined in the Austrian Epidemic Act. This means that you are not allowed to leave your home, have contact with other people or receive visitors during this period.
- If you need to go to your doctor you have to phone ahead and let them know that you have been in close contact with someone who has measles and that you are isolating at home. If you need acute medical care, call 1450 for help and tell them that you are isolating because of measles. If you have symptoms that suggest measles, also notify the [Public Health Office](#).
- If you are not immune, ask your local Public Health Office how and where you can get a vaccine. If you receive the vaccine within 72 hours after contact with a person who has or has had measles, the vaccine can prevent the onset of the disease. For children younger than 9 months, talk to your paediatrician about what to do. If you are pregnant contact your gynaecologist/obstetrician.
- If you are unsure about your immunisation status, talk to your local Public Health Office about how to check your immunity.

## Blood test to check immunity to measles in case of unclear immunisation history:

- You need to phone the laboratory in advance to inform them about having had contact with a measles patient. Only then the laboratory can take precautions in case you are already infectious.
- You can only take the blood test if you do not show any symptoms suggesting measles and you **always need to wear an FFP 2 mask outside your home**.

Have you got any further questions on measles? The health hotline of the City of Vienna at **1450** is available every day around the clock.