

Measles: It's All About Exposure Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Patients

How likely am I to be exposed to measles?

The overall exposure risk is low. Measles is not normally in the US, but can be introduced by persons who travel outside the country. Unfortunately, the number of measles outbreaks have increased significantly in the US in the last several years. This is in part due to decreasing vaccination rates in some communities and international travelers who become infected when visiting areas where measles is more widespread. Most people in the US are vaccinated and you are far more likely to be exposed to the common cold than to measles. The good news is, if you're vaccinated, you're unlikely to get sick if exposed to measles.

How would I know if I've been exposed to measles?

Exposure must have occurred within 3 weeks (21 days) **AND one of the below**

1. Exposure to a person who has a fever and rash and recently traveled internationally
2. Exposed to a person who has been diagnosed with the measles
3. Present at time and location of another measles patient based on OCPH health alert <http://www.ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/dcepi/epi/dip/prevention/measles>

I'm vaccinated and was exposed to measles – should I be worried?

If you are vaccinated and were exposed to measles, it is extremely unlikely you will get sick. Vaccinated people who get measles will have milder illness and have much lower risk for serious complications. However, if you have a weakened immune system (e.g., getting chemotherapy for cancer, on steroids or other immune lowering medicines), you are at higher risk for all infections. If you work with children, in college or vocational school settings, or in healthcare facilities, you are also at higher risk of being exposed to someone with measles and should ensure you are vaccinated.

How do I know if I am immune to measles?

Measles vaccination is part of the MMR vaccine series and is routinely recommended for all children. Chances are, if you were born in the U.S. and did not opt out of vaccination, you likely received the vaccine. If you're not sure whether you have been vaccinated, first check your immunization records to see if you received the vaccine, and if so how many doses. If you do not have these records, your doctor can order a blood test to check your immunity against measles. If the test shows you're not immune, talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated.

You are considered protected from the measles if:

- Had 1 dose of MMR and are not in high risk settings (child care, colleges, hospitals)
- Had 2 doses of MMR and are in high risk settings (child care, colleges, hospitals)
- Had ever been pregnant and had pre-natal care because rubella immunity is routinely checked in the US (rubella immunity in the US is obtained by the MMR vaccine). Check with your obstetrician.
- Were born before 1957
- Had blood tests showing you are immune to measles