

Vaccination: The Only Way to Protect Your Child and Your Community from Measles

"106 Degrees" – A True Story

For Megan Campbell's 10-month-old son, a life-threatening bout of measles caused fevers spiking to 106 degrees and sent him to the hospital.

"After picking our son up at child care because he had a fever," Megan said, "we went straight to our pediatrician who said our baby had a virus. Two days later, his fever hit 104 degrees and a rash appeared on his head."

The rash quickly crept down to his arms and chest. Megan and husband Chris turned to the Internet. Finding pictures of measles that looked like their son's rash, they rushed him to the local children's hospital. The next day, an infectious disease specialist confirmed measles.

"We spent 3 days in the hospital fearing we might lose our baby boy. He couldn't drink or eat, so he was on an IV, and for a while he seemed to be wasting away. When he began to be able to drink again we got to take him home. But the doctors told us to expect the disease to continue to run its course, including high fever—which did spike as high as 106 degrees."

Thankfully, the baby recovered fully. Megan now knows that her son was exposed to measles during his 10-month check-up, when another mother brought her ill son into the pediatrician's waiting room. The boy and his siblings had gotten measles overseas and brought it back to the United States. They had not been vaccinated.

"People who choose not to vaccinate their children actually make a choice for other children and put them at risk," Megan explained. "At 10 months, my son was too young to get the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine. But when he was 12 months old, we got him the vaccine—even though he wasn't susceptible to measles anymore. This way, he won't suffer from mumps or rubella, or spread them to anyone else."

Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatricians



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Measles Symptoms

Measles begins with a fever, then coughing, runny nose, redness of the eyes, and finally, a rash. The rash usually starts on the head and then spreads to the rest of the body. Fever can continue and reach very high temperatures. The rash can last for up to 1 week and coughing can last about 10 days.

Measles Is Serious

Measles ranges from an uncomfortable disease to a very serious one. From 2001 to 2010, about 1 out of every 4 people in the United States who got measles had to be hospitalized. Many of these serious cases were children.



Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccine

The measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR) is the best way to protect against getting measles. Getting MMR vaccine is much safer than getting measles and the risk of it causing a serious side effect is rare. Vaccination against measles is the only way to protect your child, yourself and your community from the disease.

Adults who are not sure if they have been vaccinated against measles should talk to their doctor and get an MMR booster shot or a blood test to check for immunity to measles. For children, the first dose of MMR vaccine is recommended at age 12 to 15 months. A second dose is recommended at age 4 to 6 years but can be given earlier if desired and still count for public school entry. Adults born before 1957 almost certainly had measles as children, so they are immune and do not need an MMR.

Most people do not have any side effects from the shot. Side effects are usually very mild, such as a fever or rash. More serious side effects are rare. Scientists in the United States and other countries have carefully studied the MMR shot. None has found a link between autism and the MMR shot.

How Does Measles Spread?

Measles spreads when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes. It is very contagious. You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, up to an hour after that person is gone. You can also catch measles from an infected person even before they have a measles rash. Almost everyone who has not had the MMR shot will get measles if they are exposed to the measles virus.

How many measles cases are there in the United States each year?

From 2001 to 2013, the number of measles cases reported in the United States ranged from 37 to 220. However, in some years like 2014, there have been more measles cases than usual. In 2014, there were 18 measles outbreaks in the United States, including one at Disneyland in Southern California.

Where can I learn more about the MMR shot?

To learn more about the MMR shot, talk to your or your child's doctor. You can also call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit the [CDC Vaccines for Parents](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/index.html) site (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/index.html>).