Treating Measles:

A Guide for Parents



Safe & effective ways to treat at home

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Whether or not your child has had the measles vaccine, here are some tips that you can use to help them recover, should they fall ill. Remember, the vast majority of otherwise healthy children will fight off measles very successfully, giving them life-long immunity. This leaflet is not intended to replace medical advice if your child develops severe symptoms.

Symptoms

- Starts like a cold with a runny nose, sore throat with shallow persistent cough, sometimes with conjunctivitis (sore eyes). There will be white spots on the inside of the mouth called Koplik's spots. The child will be sleepier and more miserable than usual.
- The fever usually comes a few days before the rash.
- 3 to 5 days later a rash appears, starting with small spots behind the ears and on the face and spreading downwards. Within a day it usually spreads to the body and becomes big mottled blotches. Some children will feel sick and may vomit.
- Within another 3 to 5 days the rash usually disappears and the fever goes away.
- They are most infectious in the couple of days before and after the spots appear.
- They may need to convalesce for up to 2 weeks, but be guided by your child's energy levels.

Home Treatment

- Vitamin A supplement (retinol liquid or gel) is recommended for all children with measles for 2 days: 50,000 IU for children under 6 months, 100,000 IU for ages 6-11 months, 200,000 IU for 12 months and older; spread throughout the day and mixed with e.g. yoghurt or jam.
- Let your child rest in a dimly lit room and keep them comfortably warm but not hot.
- Give them lots of liquids: water or dilute squash or fruit juice and herbal teas such as Rosehip and Elderberry.
- Loss of appetite during a fever is quite normal, fasting allows the body to rest. Start feeding again when the fever subsides or when your child has regained their appetite.
- Support the immune system with Vitamin C, D and Zinc. Garlic and Echinacea can also help.
- To soothe the rash bathe with 3 tbsp of baking soda or porridge oats added to bath water. Chamomile and Aloe Vera can also help.
- For the eyes: avoid bright light and bathe sticky eyes with cool boiled water or Euphrasia (Eyebright). Eyes can be sensitive to light for 1 to 5 weeks following the fever.
- Some GPs also prescribe homeopathic remedies; you may wish to consult one.

Fever

- The average normal temperature is 37°C. Most adults and children can run a fever of up to 40°C for several days with no danger. It is normal for healthy children to run high fevers of 39.5°C and over with an infection.
- Do not treat the fever unless it is high and keep the child warm.
- Calpol can be used to check if your child is ok aside from fever, but never use Aspirin.

Seek medical advice if:

- A baby under 6 months contracts measles.
- A cough lasts for longer than 4 days and is not improving, or if child develops fast or 'grunting' breathing.
- At any time if your child is unresponsive or difficult to wake or if their skin is pale and mottled.
- The measles is accompanied by severe earache.
- A child with a sustained high fever begins to act abnormally, e.g. convulsions, disorientation.

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This leaflet is for information only. It is not a replacement for advice from your primary healthcare provider.