

About Measles

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease. It is passed through direct contact with someone who is infected, through the air, or by touching the surfaces that an infected person touched. It can remain in the air or on surfaces for up to two hours—causing infection long after the contagious person has left. Beginning with a higher fever and inflamed eyes, measles can result in serious complications, including blindness and encephalitis, or swelling of the brain. Most measles-related deaths are due to complications from the disease, especially in children under age five.

Vaccination Strategy

Two doses of the measles vaccine are recommended for children in order to achieve 97% protection for life. Building on experiences in countries that successfully eliminated the endemic transmission of measles, vaccination efforts focus on reaching 95% of children and strengthening routine health systems to ensure high population immunity—or “herd immunity”—against measles. In addition, vaccination efforts emphasize outbreak preparedness, rapid detection and response, and public health education campaigns.

Role of Shot@Life

The United Nations Foundation, American Red Cross, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization founded the Measles & Rubella Initiative in 2001 to ensure no child dies from measles or is born with congenital rubella syndrome. Since 2001, the UN Foundation and Shot@Life have raised enough funding to provide the equivalent of 41 million measles vaccines to children around the world.

Sources (Updated 2/2021)

Measles & Rubella Initiative - measlesrubellainitiative.org/
World Health Organization - who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/measles

Key Facts

In 2018, there were more than 140,000 measles deaths globally—about 380 children every day.

Measles is one of the most contagious infectious diseases.

Measles vaccines have saved more than 23 million lives since 2000.

Every \$1 invested in measles and rubella vaccine programs yields a \$58 return.

It costs less than \$2 to fully immunize a child against measles.

