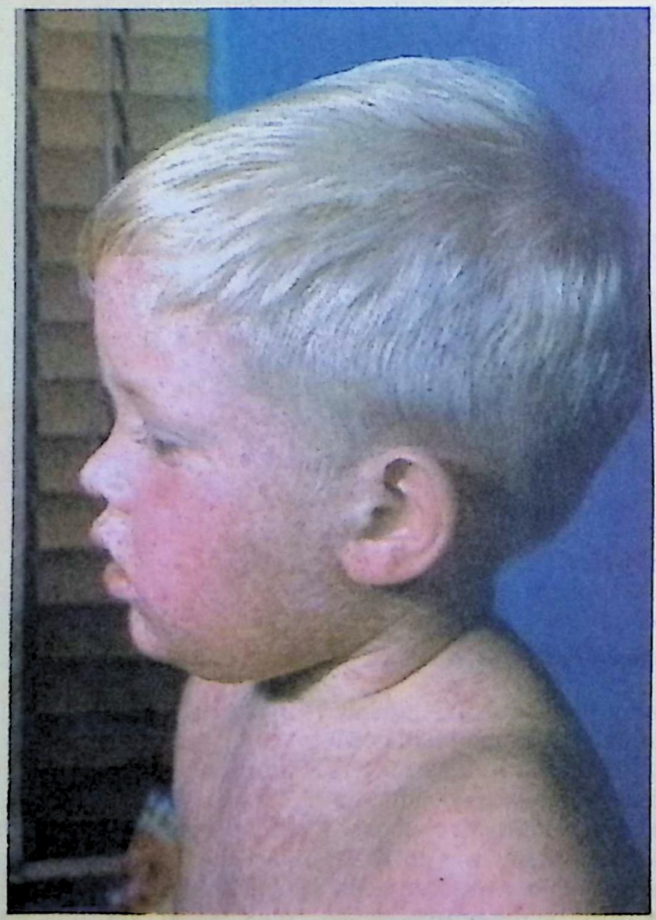
Is your child protected from measles?

Measles, also called rubeola, is a highly contagious - but rare - respiratory infection that's caused by a virus. It causes a total-body skin rash and flu-like symptoms, including a fever, cough and runny nose.

Since measles is caused by a virus, symptoms typically go away on their own without medical treatment, once the virus has run its course. But while your child is sick, it's important to make sure that he or she has plenty of fluids and rest, and does not spread the infection to others. If you have any concerns about your child's condition, talk to your child's doctor.



Signs and Symptoms

While measles is probably best known for the full-body rash that it causes, the first symptoms of the infection are usually a hacking cough, runny nose, high fever and watery red eyes. Another marker of measles are Koplik's spots, small red spots with blue-white centers that appear inside the mouth.

The measles rash typically has a red or reddish brown blotchy appearance, and first usually shows up on the forehead, then spreads downward over the face, neck, and body, then down to the feet.

Measles is highly contagious. When someone with measles sneezes or coughs, he or she can spread virus droplets through the air and infect others.

The most important thing you can do to protect your child from measles is to have him or her vaccinated according to the schedule prescribed by a doctor.

Prevention

Infants are generally protected from measles for 6 to 8 months after birth due to immunity passed on from their mothers. Older kids are usually immunised against measles according to state and school health regulations.

For most kids, the measles vaccine is part of the measles-mumps-rubella immunisations (MMR) given at 12 to 15 months of age and again at 4 to 6 years of age. Measles vaccine is not usually given to infants younger than 12 months old. But if there's a measles outbreak, the vaccine may be given when a child is 9 months old, followed by the usual MMR immunisation at 12-15 months.

As is the case with all immunisation schedules, there