

Measles (Rubeola) Immunity Test

Measles, also called rubeola, is an extremely contagious viral infection that is transmitted through respiratory secretions. A measles immunity test involves the detecting of antibodies in the blood that develop in response to the infection or through vaccination.

The measles virus infects cells in the lungs and at the back of the throat and, after a 1 to 2 week incubation, causes symptoms such as a high fever, dry cough, red eyes, light sensitivity, runny nose, sore throat, tiny white spots inside the mouth, and a characteristic rash that typically starts on the face and spreads down the body to the trunk and legs. Most people recover within two weeks, but up to 20% develop complications that may include ear infection, bronchitis, pneumonia, diarrhea, or more rarely encephalitis or blindness.

Why do I need to be tested?

Testing for measles may be used to confirm immunity to the virus due to previous infection or vaccination.

What is antibody testing?

When you are exposed to measles or has received a measles vaccination, your immune system responds by producing antibodies to the virus. Two classes of measles antibodies may be found in the blood: IgM and IgG.

IgM antibodies are the first to be produced by the body in response to a measles infection. Levels of IgM antibodies increase for several days to a maximum level and then begin to taper off over the next few weeks. IgG antibodies take longer to appear, but stay in the bloodstream for life to provide long-term protection. This test looks for the presence of IgG antibodies to determine if you have been previously infected or have been immunized; it does not detect the presence of IgM antibodies that appear in an active infection.

What should I do if my results are positive or negative?

It is always recommended you meet with a healthcare provider to determine what your laboratory test results mean to you. Your healthcare provider will review all of your test results and, combined with your health history, will be able to provide an accurate picture of your health status.

If your results were positive: If measles IgG antibodies are present, then it is likely that you have been exposed to measles either through infection or immunization. You should share your results with your healthcare provider to discuss treatment options and/or further testing.

If your results were negative: If the antibodies for measles are not found, you have likely not been exposed to the virus or received a vaccination. You should talk to your healthcare provider to let him know you have not been vaccinated and discuss your options.

What other resources are available to learn more about my health and laboratory tests?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov
- Lab Tests Online: labtestsonline.org
- WebMD: webmd.com

DLO Direct offers direct access to laboratory testing for informational purposes. A DLO Direct lab test result is not a medical diagnosis and is not intended as medical advice. Only a healthcare provider can interpret lab results and diagnose a medical condition or disease.

Because tests have not been ordered by a healthcare provider, third party entities, including Medicare and Medicaid, will not reimburse for these tests.



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