

Measles is a highly contagious viral disease occurring primarily in children. This disease is characterized by fever, cough, acute nasal mucous membrane discharge (coryza), inflammation of the lining of the eyelids (conjunctivitis), a spreading rash, and eruption of small, irregular, bright red spots (Koplik's spots) on the inner cheeks in the mouth with a minute bluish or white speck in the center of each. Measles is caused by a paramyxovirus. The disease is highly contagious and can be transmitted from four days before the rash begins. The virus lives in the mucus in the nose and throat of an infected person and is spread into the air when the infected person sneezes or coughs. Measles affects males and females equally and occurs worldwide. As a result of vaccination to prevent measles, all cases that now occur in the United States have been brought from other countries. Measles continues to be a significant public health problem in developing countries, with 30-40 million cases per year. Most reported cases are from Africa. Measles is diagnosed by physical findings. This disease is characterized by fever, cough, acute nasal mucous membrane discharge (coryza), inflammation of the lining of the eyelids (conjunctivitis), a spreading rash, and eruption of small, irregular, bright red spots (Koplik's spots) on the inner cheeks in the mouth with a minute bluish or white speck in the center of each. Confirmation of measles virus infection can be done with a blood test called a measles virus sandwich-capture immunoglobulin (IgM) antibody assay. This test is most accurate if performed after the third day of rash up to one month after the beginning of rash.