

Rubeola (Red Measles)

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Key Words

Koplik's spots: Tiny spots occurring inside the mouth, especially on the inside of the cheek. These spots consist of minuscule white dots (like grains of salt or sand) set onto a reddened bump. Unique to measles.

Definition

Measles is highly contagious, acute viral infection, which causes an illness displaying a characteristic skin rash called Koplik's spots. Measles is also sometimes called rubeola, 5-day measles, or hard measles. It is spread by direct contact, by breathing infected air or droplets emitted by coughing or sneezing, or by touching infected towels or bedding.



Figure 1: Koplik's spots

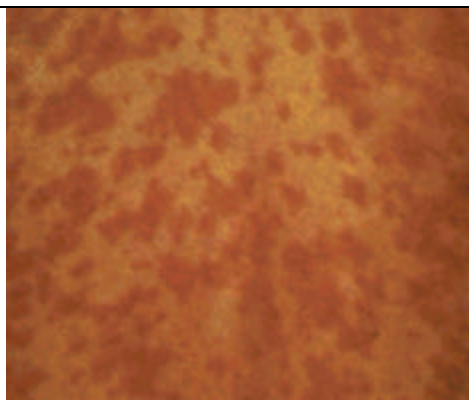


Figure 2: Rashes on the Skin

Causes and Incidence

Rubeola is caused by a paramyxovirus and is spread by airborne droplets or direct contact with nasopharyngeal secretions. Once someone is infected with the virus, it takes about 7-18 days before he or she actually becomes ill. The most contagious time period is the three to five days before symptoms begin through about four days after the characteristic measles rash has begun to appear. Infection confers lifelong immunity.

Disease Process

The virus invades the nasopharynx and the respiratory epithelium, incubates, and multiplies there for about 7 to 14 days. The first signs of measles infection are fever, extremely runny nose, red, runny eyes, and a cough. A few days later, a rash appears in the mouth, particularly on the mucous membrane that lines the insides of the cheek. This rash consists of tiny white dots (like grains of salt or sand) on a reddish bump. These are called Koplik's spots, and are unique to measles infection. The throat becomes red, swollen, and sore. A couple of days after the appearance of the Koplik's spots, the measles rash begins. It appears in a characteristic progression, from the head, face, and neck, to the trunk, then abdomen, and next out along the arms and legs. The rash starts out as flat, red patches, but eventually develops some bumps. The rash may be somewhat itchy. When the rash begins to appear, the fever usually climbs higher, sometimes reaching as high as 105°F. In case eruptions does not come out patient may feel nausea, vomiting and some time diarrhea with multiple swollen lymph nodes. The rash usually lasts about five days. As it fades, it turns a brownish color, and eventually the affected skin becomes dry and flaky. The cough is usually more problematic at this point, and the patient feels awful.

Potential Complications

Though rarely fatal in developed countries, measles is most serious in young babies and adults. Complications occur in about 1 in 15 cases and include: encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), bronchitis, pneumonia, convulsions, and inflammation of the middle ear. Complications are common and severe in poorly nourished and chronically ill children. Encephalitis occurs in about 1 in 5,000 cases and may cause permanent brain damage or death.

Diagnostic Tests

The diagnosis is made on the basis of the symptom pattern plus a positive culture of pharyngeal or conjunctival secretions or of blood or urine, plus a fourfold increase in specific antibodies.

Treatment

There are a variety of general measures that can be taken to treat measles and help the patient feel more comfortable. These include:

- Humidifying the air to ease cough.
- Drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Keeping the room lights dim to relieve sensitivity to light.
- Getting plenty of rest.
- Eating nutritious and easily digestible food. It is found that dry sweet fruit like dry Dates, Raisin are very useful supplement during measles infection.

Homoeopathic Remedies: The most common Homoeopathic medicines used are:

Aconite Nap: At the beginning. Fever with full, quick pulse, dry hot, burning skin; restlessness; catarrhal irritation, from the eyes down into the bronchial tubes; photophobia; nosebleed; dry, hacking, even croupy, cough; stitching pains in the chest; restless sleep, with jerking and starting; grating on teeth; moaning and groaning, or sleeplessness, with great agitation and anxiety; pain in stomach and bowels, with vomiting and diarrhoea.

Antim Tart: Eruption does not come out properly or is repelled; head confused with drowsiness; rattling breathing; dyspnoea; cough loose, but hardly any sputa; gastro-enteric affections.

Belladonna: At the commencement heat, with moisture in the skin; quick but soft pulse; constant drowsy sleep, or drowsiness, with inability to go to sleep; congestion to head; injected eyes; thick white-coated tongue; sore throat, with difficult deglutition; hoarseness and dry cough, which fatigues the chest, with oppression and suffocative fits; convulsive twitching of the limbs; convulsions; violent thirst.

Bryonia Alb: Slowly forthcoming eruption, which remains pale; inflammatory affections of the chest; dry, painful cough; rheumatic pains in limbs; constipation. Retrocession of eruption, with prostration, fever and cerebral symptoms.

Cuprum Met: Delirium of measles complicated with bronchitis; howling or muttering deliria with anguish; repercussion of eruption, with convulsions; vomiting and gagging; pale or bluish face and twitching of limbs; Aggravation on arousing terrorized from sleep.

Pulsatilla: Mind cases; catarrhal symptoms prominent, coryza and profuse lachrymation; cough dry at night and loose in daytime; child sits up in bed to cough; earache; fever with hot head and dry lips, but complains very little of thirst; eruption when fully out often has a dark appearance; itching of eyes, Amelioration by rubbing; dry lips Amelioration by licking them with tongue; chronic loose cough after measles. Diarrhea due to suppression of eruptions.

Sanguinaria Can: This is one of our best remedies in dry and humid coughs following measles. Brigham says that few remedies have proved equal to ****Sanguinaria** for bronchial coughs. It is usually a dry cough excited by tickling in the larynx and upper chest. The expectoration is rust colored and the breath may be offensive. Again, it may have a loose cough, but the secretion of mucus is expectorated with great difficulty, here being like ****Kali bichromicum**. Holcomb says: " It has done me more good in pulmonary diseases than any other single remedy." Almost any cough with a *****hectic** flush and dryness of the throat will yield to ****Sanguinaria**.

Sticta Pul: Post measles cough: Incessant dryness and spasmodic cough, worse in the evening and during the night, with oppression of the chest, and a feeling as if a hard mass were collecting in the lungs; feeling of fullness and heavy pressure at the root of the nose, with tingling; conjunctivitis, with profuse but mild discharge; sleeplessness.

Dr. M. D. Youngman, of Atlantic City, thus summed up the indications for **Sticta in coughs:

1. It is indicated in harsh, racking, incessant, " unprofitable " cough of spasmodic type.
2. It is particularly adapted to neurotic, rheumatic, and gouty individuals.
3. It is more valuable in sub-acute and chronic cases.
4. It is most suitable to old age.
5. It allays irritation, soothes irritable tissues, removes hyper- sensitive conditions of the respiratory mucous membrane and promotes sleep.
6. He suggested it as being worthy of a trial in whooping cough.

Zincum Met:

Crying out in sleep and awaking from sleep terrified (Lyc.); considerable evidence of debility, the child has not strength enough to develop the eruption.

Conclusion

Homoeopathic Medicines are easily acceptable to the common victims of this disease i.e. children and provides prompt relief.

Warning

The above given information of the disease is for the general awareness for the commoners. Homoeopathic medicines should not be taken without the proper guidance of qualified and registered Homoeopathic physician.

References

1. Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia
2. Mosby's Medical Encyclopedia
3. Gale's Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine
4. Homoeopathic Materia Medica By Dr. Kent.