

# Smallpox



## What is smallpox?

Smallpox used to be a worldwide disease. But because of a vaccine, it was wiped out everywhere. Today you can only find smallpox in special laboratories. If terrorists stole the smallpox virus from a lab, they could use it to make a lot of people very sick.

If there is a smallpox alert:

- Listen to the news for instructions.
- Stay away from anyone who might have smallpox.
- If you think you have been exposed to smallpox, stay away from other people.
- Call your doctor or hospital.

## Is smallpox dangerous?

Yes. Three out of 10 people who get smallpox may die. Most people survive getting sick from smallpox, but they will get scars from the disease. You can get medicine to ease pain of smallpox and prevent other infections, but there is no cure for smallpox. Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent smallpox.

## Are health officials ready for a smallpox emergency?

Yes. There is enough vaccine for everyone in the United States. Some health care workers are already vaccinated, trained, and ready to help stop the spread of smallpox in your area.

## Is smallpox contagious?

Yes. You can get smallpox if you:

- Are near someone who has smallpox, especially if the person has a fever, rash, or red spots on the tongue and mouth area, or
- Touch something infected with smallpox, like a diaper, blanket, or clothes.

## Should I get vaccinated?

You should only get vaccinated if there is a smallpox outbreak. When there is no outbreak, you do not need to get vaccinated against smallpox.

## What if I think I was exposed to smallpox?



Call your doctor or hospital right away. **And**, stay away from other people, until they tell you what to do.

## What are the symptoms of smallpox?

Within 7–17 days of coming in contact with someone with smallpox, you may have:

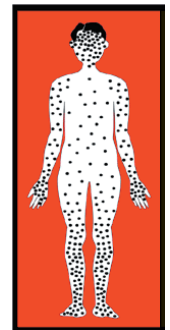
- fever
- tiredness
- headaches and body aches
- vomiting

Then, 2–4 days later after feeling sick, you will get a rash.

## What does the rash look like?

It starts with small red spots in your mouth. It spreads quickly to your face, then your arms, legs, hands and feet.

The rash turns into bumps that fill with pus and then become scabs. The scabs fall off in about 3 weeks, leaving scars.



## For more information...

Call CDC for help in English or Spanish:  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)  
888-232-6348 (TTY)

Or visit: [www.cdc.gov/smallpox](http://www.cdc.gov/smallpox)  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/epo](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/epo)