Smallpox
Fact Sheet

Smallpox is a serious disease caused by the variola virus. Thanks to the success of vaccination programs, smallpox was eradicated.

It is spread from person-to-person, usually by coughing or sneezing. Rarely, people get sick from touching fluid from open sores and scabs or through contaminated items like bedding.

**Signs and Symptoms**

- **High Fever**
- **Head and Body Aches**
- **Rash**
- **Vomiting**

Smallpox starts with high fever, head and body aches, and sometimes vomiting. A rash develops that spreads and becomes raised bumps and pus-filled blisters. These will crust, scab, and fall off after about three weeks, leaving a pitted scar. Symptoms often appear 17 to 19 days after the virus enters the body, with an average of 10 to 14 days.

**Prevention & Treatment**

- Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent smallpox. While it is not widely available, vaccine can be provided in an emergency.
- There is no proven treatment for smallpox. Some drugs may help treat it or prevent it from getting worse.

**For More Information**

Contact your doctor or the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-821-5821 for more information.

You can also visit [www.cdc.gov/smallpox](http://www.cdc.gov/smallpox).

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