

MEASLES

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Measles?

Measles is an acute, highly contagious infectious disease, caused by a virus. Persons who have not had the disease and have not been immunized are susceptible.

How is it spread?

Infection usually occurs by direct contact with droplets of an infected person or by breathing in droplets projected into the air by a person with measles infection. Persons are contagious usually four days before the onset of the rash to four days after the appearance of rash.

How is it treated?

- Treatment of measles is symptomatic.
- Physician can recommend preparations to relieve rash itching and use of acetaminophen to control fever.
- Maintain rest.
- Protect eyes from strong or direct light.
- Encourage fluid intake.
- Vitamin A supplementation may be recommended by a physician since reserves may be depleted rapidly during measles infection.

How can we prevent Measles?

- Measles is a vaccine preventable disease.
- Two doses of measles vaccine combined with mumps and rubella (MMR) are recommended. The first dose is recommended at 12-15 months of age and the second at school entry (age 4-6).
- In Michigan all new school enterers must have two doses of MMR vaccine given at the recommended intervals. Unimmunized school enterers can receive the two doses of MMR vaccine one month (30 days) apart to meet this requirement.
- Unimmunized contacts to a measles case should be immunized with MMR within 72 hours after exposure since the vaccine may provide protection.
- Immune globulin may provide short term protection for susceptible contacts for whom the risk of complications of measles is very high, such as immunocompromised persons, pregnant women, or infants under one year of age.
- A child diagnosed with measles should be excluded from school for at least four days after the appearance of the rash.

SYMPTOMS OF MEASLES

- Fever (101° or higher) 3-4 days before appearance of rash
- Watery, red eyes, and increased sensitivity to light
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Blotchy red rash appears 4-7 days after other symptoms
- Rash usually starts at the hairline, then involves the face and upper neck and spreads to the trunk and extremities
- Rash typically lasts 5-7 days
- Generally, the interval from exposure to appearance of the rash is 14 days

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