



THE FACTS: Measles

What is Measles?

Measles is a serious infection caused by a virus. Since the measles vaccine became available in 1963 the number of cases of measles reported has declined significantly. Although measles is now considered a very uncommon infection in Canada, it commonly occurs in many other countries. Measles can be prevented by immunization.

What are the Symptoms?

Children with measles usually have a high fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes. After a few days they get a rash. The rash starts out as a few red spots, which soon join together and cover the body. The infection can make children very ill and they may need to be hospitalized. One in ten children may get an ear infection or pneumonia. Adults who get measles are usually very sick; the infection often leads to complications such as pneumonia. A blood test is required in order for a doctor to make the diagnosis. There is no medication to cure measles.

How is it Spread?

The measles virus is very infectious and spreads easily from person to person through the air. A person infected with the virus can spread it 3 to 5 days before the rash appears and up to four days after that. Almost everyone who has not been immunized or has not already had measles and is then exposed will get the infection.

Things Parents Can Do

- If your child has been exposed to someone with the infection:
 - and has received the MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella) vaccine, it is very unlikely that your child will develop measles.
 - If your child has not been immunized, call your doctor. The infection can be prevented with an injection of immune globulin. Immune globulin contains antibodies, substances that can prevent infection. The measles vaccine should be given about three months after the immune globulin to children who are at least 12 months old. Your child must get one of these before returning to the school/daycare facility. If your child gets neither, he/she will have to remain out of school/daycare for two weeks after the last case of measles has occurred.
- Cases of measles must not return to school/daycare until at least four days after rash begins.
- Call the Health Unit to report the illness.

**For Further Information Contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.**

