

# *F a c t s*

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## MEASLES

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### **What is measles?**

Measles, or red measles, is one of the most serious of the common childhood infections. It is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. Measles is reportable to Public Health.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Early symptoms include a fever 38.3°C (101°F) or higher, cough, runny nose, and irritated eyes. A red blotchy rash appears on the third to seventh day and starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. The rash lasts 4-7 days and appears 14 days after exposure to the virus. Measles is most communicable a few days before the onset of the early symptoms and remains contagious until 4 days after the onset of the rash. Complications can be serious and include ear infections, pneumonia, diarrhoea, and less frequently, encephalitis, which may result in brain damage.

### **How is it spread?**

Measles is spread by direct contact with nasal or throat secretions from an infected person. This can happen when the infected person talks, coughs or sneezes, which spreads droplets containing the virus. The measles virus can live in the droplets for several hours. It takes about 10 days, varying from 7 to 18 days, to come down with measles after being in contact with someone who has the disease.

### **How is it diagnosed?**

A blood test is strongly recommended to confirm or rule out the diagnosis of measles. This is extremely important to determine if it's truly a measles case because children are now routinely vaccinated twice with the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine. If a blood test is not feasible then a finger prick is recommended. A urine specimen and/or throat swab may also be requested for diagnosis. Contact your doctor if you suspect your child has measles.

### **Is there a vaccine?**

Immunization against measles is recommended for all children after one year of age and a booster dose at 18 months of age. A person is almost 100% protected against measles after receiving both MMR needles.

### **Are there any exclusions?**

Any child diagnosed with measles is excluded from their childcare facility or school for at least 4 days after the rash appears.

# — *Health & Environment Facts* —

## **What can I do as a parent?**

- If another child has measles, check your child's immunization record to see if he or she has had the measles or MMR vaccine.
- If your child has not had the vaccine and is 1 year of age or older, contact your physician or Public Health to have your child vaccinated as soon as possible.
- If you think your child has measles, contact your physician to confirm the diagnosis and to arrange for a blood test.

For more information please call Public Health at 376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.