



DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES
CITY OF CHICAGO

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HEAD START HEALTH TRENDS COMMUNIQUE: MEASLES VIRUS

WHAT IS THE MEASLES EPIDEMIC?

Measles is a preventable communicable disease caused by the measles virus. It is a respiratory disease that can have serious life-threatening complications. In the year 2000 measles was eliminated and declared no longer endemic (common disease) in the United States. Therefore the recent confirmed cases of measles in the US are considered part of an epidemic (more than usually expected). In the past week there have been 5 confirmed cases of Measles in Palatine in infants that attend the same day care center. These infants are too young to routinely receive the Measles vaccination.

HOW IS IT SPREAD? Measles is highly contagious and is be easily spread through respiratory droplets from the cough or sneeze of infected persons. The respiratory droplets can remain alive in the air and on surfaces for up to two hours. Infected persons can spread the disease for up to 4 days before through 4 days after the rash develops. An unvaccinated person has a 90 percent chance of catching the disease if exposed to the virus.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS? Symptoms generally appear seven to 14 days after exposure. Persons may have high fever, cough, runny nose, and red watery eyes. Early in the disease the person may have white spots in the mouth. 3 to 5 days after the general symptoms begin the rash develops. It is erythematous (red) macular papular (flat and bumpy mixture), starting on the face at the hairline and spreading downward to the rest of the body. Infants and persons older than 20 are at higher risk for complications. Pneumonia is the most common cause of death in young children. Encephalitis (brain swelling) may occur in about one in 1000 cases in children.

TREATMENT: Usually there is no specific medication given unless complications occur. Otherwise supportive fever medication may be given. If a known unvaccinated person is exposed he or she may be able to prevent the disease by receiving the vaccination within 3 days and specific immunoglobulin against measles within 6 days. Persons suspected or known to have measles should not be around those unvaccinated for 21 days

PREVENTION: The measles vaccination is recommended for infants at 12 months of age with booster between 4 and 6 years of age. Persons not having received the vaccination are recommended to receive 2 vaccinations for immunity. The 2-dose vaccination regimen



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is 95% effective. Hand hygiene and cleaning of hard surface are activities to assist in the prevention of this communicable disease.

EXCLUSION:

Persons suspected or known to have active measles should be excluded from school for 21 days. Children with a high fever should be excluded until the fever has resolved for at least 24 hours.

- Use glove and mask precautions
- Isolate from other persons

<http://www.cdc.gov>

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