

May 7, 2010

Measles Information

- Measles is a highly contagious and infectious disease caused by a virus that is spread easily through the air.
- As an airborne disease, measles can be spread through the airspace shared with an infected individual.
- Measles can survive up to two hours in the air, after an infected individual has exhaled into the air.
- Measles can also be spread through coughing and sneezing.
- The potential spread of measles is a serious health concern.

Risk of Illness

- Individuals who have NOT had confirmed measles in the past or have NOT been vaccinated are at high risk (very susceptible) for illness.
- Susceptible persons exposed to the virus can develop symptoms of measles within seven to 18 days, but typically start seeing symptoms 10 days after exposure to measles.
- A person with measles is considered to be infectious to others from one day before having any symptoms (which is typically about three to seven days before the appearance of the rash), until four days after the appearance of the rash.

Symptoms and Treatment

- If you develop the following symptoms, please avoid contact with other people and call HealthLink Alberta or your family physician immediately for further instructions:
- Symptoms of Measles
 - Fever 38.3° C or higher
 - Cough, runny nose or red eyes
 - Red blotchy rash appearing three to seven days after fever starts, beginning behind the ears and on the face and spreading down to the body and then to the arms and legs
- Individuals with these symptoms should avoid contact with others and contact HealthLink Alberta or a physician as soon as possible to discuss their symptoms **prior** to attending a clinic or hospital. This will help reduce the potential risk of spreading the disease to others.
- There is no specific treatment for measles. Bed rest is recommended.

Prevention and Immunity

- There is no cure for measles, but it can be prevented with vaccination.
- Vaccination is the best defense against measles.
- MMR Vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella
- MMR Vaccine is part of the routine Childhood Immunization Program in Alberta
- Children in Alberta typically receive 1st dose of MMR Vaccine at 12 months of age; second dose between the ages of four and six years.
- A child is protected against measles if he/she has:

- Blood test showing immunity to measles; or
- Two doses (given more than one month apart) of measles-containing vaccine (MMR) given on or after 12 months of age
- Adults (including pregnant women) are protected against measles if they:
 - Were born before 1970; or
 - Have blood test showing immunity to measles; or
 - Have had two doses of measles-containing vaccine; or
 - Have had one dose of measles containing-vaccine given after 18 years of age

Stats/Other Info

- In Alberta, there were eight cases of measles between 2005 and 2009.
 - None of these cases resulted in death
- Measles tends to be more severe in infants and adults than in children
- Measles causes swelling in the brain in approximately one in 1,000 cases.
- Measles is fatal in approximately one in 3,000 cases.