

Measles

This leaflet explains what measles is, how it will affect your child and how the infection is treated. If you have any questions or concerns that aren't answered here, please speak to one of the nursing staff.

What is measles?

Measles is a viral infection, usually affecting children, that causes fever, a rash and tiredness and irritability.

Is it contagious?

Yes. Measles is infectious from the day before the symptoms appear until 4 days after the rash appears. It is spread by direct contact with sneezing and coughing. You should make sure you wash your hands after touching your child's skin if you suspect they have measles.

How do I know if my child has measles?

The first symptoms are usually tiredness, fever, conjunctivitis, cough and cold symptoms and spots on the cheek or in the mouth. A child with measles may also be sensitive to bright light. A few days later, a bright red rash usually spreads from the face and neck downward to the rest of the body. The rash lasts about 4-7 days.

What is the treatment for measles?

There is no specific treatment for measles. Rest and plenty of fluids will help treat the symptoms and reducing the amount of clothing or bedding and giving paracetamol (Calpol) as instructed on the bottle label if required should help with the fever.

A measles vaccine can be given to people in close contact with the ill child, if they have not already been immunised. This vaccine can be given up to 72 hours after exposure to the disease.

What should I do if I think my child has measles?

See your GP. If your child is well enough to visit the surgery, inform the surgery staff that you are bringing someone with suspected measles as they may put you in a side waiting room. Measles can be more serious for the following:

- Newborn babies

- Children younger than 13 months who have not been vaccinated
- Those with poor resistance to infection (the immuno-suppressed)

Can measles be prevented?

The MMR vaccine, which combines vaccines for measles, mumps and German measles, is available to children at 13 months of age and again before they go to school. Recent concerns about a link between the MMR vaccine and inflammatory bowel disease and autism have been investigated by the Department of Health and they concluded that the MMR vaccine was the safest and best option for children. However, parents who have any concerns about vaccinating their child with the MMR vaccine should discuss the matter further with their GP or health visitor.

Measles, mumps and rubella vaccines are not available separately on the NHS.

The NHS does not recommend single measles, mumps or rubella vaccines because there is no evidence to support the use of single vaccines or to suggest that they are "safer" than MMR. Having single vaccines puts your child at risk of catching measles, mumps or rubella in the time in between the vaccines.

How soon can my child return to school?

Your child should stay off school for at least 4 days after the rash first appeared and until they are feeling well enough to return.

More information

www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/pages/introduction.aspx

NHS 111. You should use the NHS 111 service if you urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Your GP's tel number: _____

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
London Road, Reading RG1 5AN
0118 322 5111 (switchboard)
Visit the Trust website at www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

PAED_294
Paediatric Unit, May 2014
Reviewed: April 2017 / TK
Review due: April 2019