Measles (Rubeola) Infection

Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that lives in the nose and throat mucus of an infected person.

**Signs and Symptoms**

Symptoms appear after 10-14 days after a person has been infected with the measles virus.

The early phase begins with these symptoms:
- Red eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Fever
- A run-down or lethargic feeling
- Runny nose
- Loss of appetite
- Cough

The secondary phase develops in 2-4 days, with the development of a rash:
- The rash starts as small red bumps on the face that spread to the trunk and then to the arms & legs.
- The rash is usually not itchy, but as it clears, the skin may shed (this looks like skin that is peeling after a sunburn).
- People with measles may also develop small grayish spots on the inside of the cheek, called "Koplik spots."

Although measles is often only a mild disease, a few serious complications may occur (Infection in the lungs or Inflammation of the brain).

**Prevention**

The best way to prevent measles is to get the measles vaccine!

**Transmission**

An infected person carries the virus in their respiratory tract. They can easily spread the virus to others when they cough and/or sneeze.

The measles virus can live for up to 2 hours on surfaces or in the air where the infected person coughed or sneezed.

Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of close family and friends who are not immune will also become infected.

**When Is a Person Contagious?**

Measles can be transmitted from 4 days before and to 4 days after the appearance of the rash. Most infected people spread the infection without being aware they are ill.

A person who has received the measles vaccinations or had the measles infection, in the past, they cannot get the infection caused by that virus.

**What If You Are Exposed?**

Important to call your health care provider if you:
- Have never had the measles infection
- Have not been vaccinated with the measles vaccine.
- Have a weakened immune system caused by infection or medication; for example, HIV/AIDS or cancer
- Had transplants
- Taking chemotherapy, immunosuppressive medications, or long-term use of steroids
- Are pregnant.

Individuals that have not been vaccinated and have never had measles should receive their first measles vaccine. The measles vaccine may prevent disease if given within 72 hours of exposure.

Immune globulin may have some benefit if given within six days of exposure.

The CDC recommends that immune globulin be utilized for household contacts of infected people, immunocompromised people, and pregnant women. It is not recommended that immune globulin be utilized to control a measles outbreak.

**Self-Care at Home**

Although there is no specific treatment or cure for measles, there are steps that can make the disease more tolerable. These include the following:
- Getting plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids to help avoid dehydration.
- A humidifier or vaporizer may ease the cough.
- Pain relievers and fever reducers, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, can help with symptoms when used according to directions.
- If someone in your household has measles, take these precautions to protect vulnerable family and friends:
  - Isolation. Because measles is highly contagious from about four days before to four days after the rash breaks out, people with measles shouldn't return to activities in which they interact with other people during this period.
  - It may also be necessary to keep non-immunized people away from the infected person.

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