



April 2017

Due to the recent number of confirmed cases of measles in Hennepin County, we are reaching out to families with information from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

**What is measles?** Measles, also called rubeola, is a very contagious disease caused by a virus.

**What are the symptoms?** Measles symptoms begin with a fever, cough, runny nose, and watery eyes. Then a rash appears, usually 2 to 3 days after the fever begins and lasts 5 to 6 days. The rash begins at the hairline; moves to the face and upper neck and then down the body. Symptoms appear about 8 to 12 days after a person is exposed to measles.

**What should you do if experiencing symptoms?** Call your doctor or clinic right away, if you see symptoms of measles. Your doctor or clinic will let you know if you need to come in. Be sure to stay at home and avoid having visitors until you have talked with your doctor or clinic.

**How serious is measles?** Measles can be a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. Many people with measles have complications like diarrhea, ear infections, pneumonia, or acute encephalitis (a brain infection that can lead to permanent brain damage). Complications are more common in children under 5 years of age and adults older than 20.

Measles during pregnancy increases the risk of premature labor, miscarriage, and low birth weight infants. Measles can be especially severe in persons whose immune systems are weak.

**How does measles spread?** Measles is spread through the air when people who have it breathe and cough. It is highly contagious. You cannot get measles more than once, because after you have had it you are immune.

**Who is at risk for getting measles?** Measles spreads easily among people who are not vaccinated. Areas with low immunization rates are a concern not only for those who are unvaccinated by choice, but also for those who cannot be vaccinated due to health status or age.

**Vaccination recommendations:** All Minnesota children 12 months and older who have not received a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine should get it now. Adults who have never received the MMR vaccine and have never had measles should get the vaccine now. Vaccine recommendations may expand if the measles outbreak spreads to more communities.

**What if there is a case of measles in a school or other setting (e.g., summer camp, childcare, worksite, clinic)?** MDH and the local health departments would work to identify individuals who may have been exposed, assess their immunity to measles, and recommend post-exposure prophylaxis as needed for that particular situation. Following recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), if an unvaccinated person is exposed, they will need to be excluded for a period of 21 days after last exposure.

For up-to-date Measles information from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH):

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/measles/index.html>