



## **SOUTH EAST LONDON HEALTH PROTECTION TEAM**

### **MEASLES FACTSHEET**

#### **What is measles?**

Measles is a highly infectious illness caused by a virus.

#### **How do you catch measles?**

You can catch measles by direct contact and by coughing and sneezing. Measles occurs almost always in children who have not been immunised.

#### **How do I know if my child has measles?**

Your child will develop some or all of the following symptoms: a runny nose followed by conjunctivitis (an infection of the eye with symptoms including itching in the eye, a “gritty” feeling in the eye and a sticky yellow discharge), cough and inflamed tonsils. Small white spots appear inside the cheeks. After 2 to 3 days a temperature and rash develop. The rash starts behind the ears and spreads over the face and body.

#### **What do I do if I think my child has measles?**

You should contact your GP.

Your child should not go to school for the period they feel unwell and for four days from the start of the rash. Your child should not have close contact with any pregnant women during this time. Your child should also not have close contact with any children with depressed immunity during this time. If your child has been in close contact with a pregnant woman or with a child with depressed immunity you should ask them to contact a GP.

#### **What is “close contact”?**

Close contact would be described as people living in the same family, or playing with the ill person in a confined room.

#### **So measles can be passed onto other people?**

Yes it can, as it is a highly infectious virus. A person with measles is most infectious four days before the rash appears and for four days after. This is the same period that they will feel unwell. This is why we ask people with measles to avoid contact with pregnant women or people with depressed immunity and to stay away from school until four days after the onset of the rash.

### **How is measles treated?**

Treatment for measles involves managing the symptoms. This includes resting at home and taking paracetamol to control high temperatures.

### **How can I prevent my child passing the virus to other people?**

By keeping your child at home during the period they feel unwell and for four days from the start of the rash. Handwashing and disposing of tissues is also important. Once your child is better you should see your GP to make sure that your child has had two doses of the MMR vaccine.

### **How do we confirm a diagnosis of Measles?**

A simple salivary or oral fluid test has been developed to help confirm measles.

### **How can I prevent my child getting measles?**

The only effective way to prevent getting measles is to immunise all children against it. Most children who get measles have not had the MMR vaccine. We strongly recommend that children over the age of 12 months who have not had the MMR vaccine should be immunised. Two doses are recommended. Please contact your GP or practice nurse to discuss this.

Children who have had a positive measles test result but who are not fully vaccinated are still advised to have two doses of MMR, to make sure they are also protected against mumps and rubella.

**For further information try the NHS Choices website:**

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx>