

# Measles

## Information Leaflet

### What is Measles?

Measles is a highly infectious illness which spread very easily. Symptoms of measles are:

- High fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red eyes
- Red rash that starts on the head and moves down the body

Measles can cause complications such as chest infections, fits, ear infections and swelling of the brain. Measles does not appear to cause birth defects in the baby if contracted during pregnancy however it may increase the risk of miscarriage, premature labour or a baby with low birth weight especially if high fever is left untreated.

### How is Measles Spread?

Measles can spread from one person to another. You can catch measles through direct contact with an infected person or through the air when they cough or sneeze. The virus can also survive and remain contagious on surfaces for up to two hours.

It takes from 7 to 18 days (average 10 to 12 days) after exposure for a patient to develop an infection. A patient is infectious from 4 days before the onset of rash to 4 days afterwards.

When a person is ill with measles, they should avoid contact with others from the time of diagnosis until 4 days after the onset of rash by staying home from work or school and staying in a separate room if possible. If you need to be visited in the hospital or in the GP practice, inform them in advance.

### Is there any treatment for measles?

There is currently no treatment available to prevent infection once it has occurred. Care focuses on relieving the symptoms. It is very important that a high fever is controlled by giving Paracetamol during pregnancy.

### How Can Measles be Prevented?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent measles and measles complications. This vaccine is included in the combination measles-mumps-rubella (MMR). MMR vaccine is offered in 2 doses.

### Should the Vaccine be Given in Pregnancy?

No. MMR should not be administered during pregnancy. The MMR vaccine is a live vaccine. It can be given before or after pregnancy, including breast feeding women.

### How do I know if I am immune?

A person who has had measles will be immune (consider all Irish women born before 1978 immune) or has had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. You need to inform the hospital that you were exposed to measles. The booking blood which was taken at the time of registering your pregnancy will be tested for measles immunity. You will be informed about the result.

### What should I do if I have been exposed to measles?

Inform the hospital immediately. If it is needed to check your immunity, your booking blood will be tested and if you are non-immune, Human Normal Immunoglobulin may be administered (ideally within 72 hours and up to 6 days after exposure) to pregnant women who are non-immune and have had significant exposure.

