**Measles Fact Sheet**

**What is measles and what causes it?**

Measles, also known as rubeola, is a highly contagious, serious febrile rash illness that is caused by a virus. Although often thought of as a childhood disease, people of any age can get measles.

**What are the symptoms of measles?**

Symptoms of measles usually begin 8-12 days after a person has come in contact with the virus. It starts with fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. After a few days a rash develops and lasts about a week. However, for some people who get measles, the disease can be more serious and cause complications.

**How does measles spread?**

Measles is spread from person-to-person by airborne droplets and direct contact with infected respiratory secretions. The highly contagious virus can be found in the air after someone who is infected with measles coughs or sneezes and can live for up to two hours in an airspace after an infected person leaves the area. The virus can also be spread by direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions and can remain contagious on surfaces for up to 2 hours. If other people breathe the contaminated air or touch the infected surface, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouths, they can become infected. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected. Typically, a person is contagious from four days before rash onset through four days after rash onset.

**How is measles treated?**

There is no cure or medicine that kills the measles virus once someone develops measles. Treatment is primarily supportive: rest, fluids, and acetaminophen (Tylenol) to help reduce the fever and feel more comfortable. Depending on the severity of a person’s illness, doctors may administer other treatments or medications. Most patients will recover on their own, without complications.

**How can you prevent the spread of measles?**

The best protection against measles is measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. MMR vaccine provides long-lasting protection against all strains of measles.

Additional steps to prevent the spread of disease may include:

• Avoiding close contact with others who are coughing or ill

• Washing hands often

• Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough and sneeze into your sleeve

• Staying at home if ill

• Seeking medical attention if measles-like symptoms develop