



Kanawha-Charleston Health Department Important Health Information for the Public: Measles and MMR Vaccination

Measles is making an unwanted comeback! The year 2011 has already seen more cases of measles in the U.S. than any year since 1996. The reason for measles resurgence is largely due to an increase in intentionally unvaccinated children and unvaccinated international travelers. Measles is a highly contagious illness with serious consequences, including death; the good news, however, is that measles can easily be prevented by getting vaccinated.

What is measles?

Measles is a respiratory disease caused by a virus that normally grows in the cells that line the back of the throat and lungs. Signs and symptoms of measles generally begin about 7-14 days after a person is infected and include:

- Blotchy rash
- High fever (103°—105°F)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Feeling run down, achy.
- Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth (Koplik's spots)



A typical case of measles begins with mild to moderate fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes, and sore throat. Two or three days after symptoms begin, Koplik's spots may appear inside the mouth.

How is it transmitted?

Measles is highly contagious and can be spread to others from four days before to four days after the rash appears. It can be spread person to person through the air, for example by coughing or sneezing.

How can it be prevented?

Measles can be prevented by the combination MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Children should get 2 doses of MMR vaccine. The first dose at 12-15 months of age and the second dose at 4-6 years of age. The MMR vaccine is the safest protection you can give your child against measles. For more information about MMR vaccine safety, visit the following website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/measles/default.htm#safety>

How serious is measles?

Measles is a serious disease, with 30% of reported cases experiencing one or more complications. Death from measles occurs in approximately 2 per 1,000 reported cases in the United States. Complications from measles are more common among very young children (younger than five years of age) and elderly adults.

Who is at risk?

Any person who is unvaccinated, regardless of age. This includes both unvaccinated children and adults. Others at increased risk for infection are international travelers and college students.

For additional information, visit www.kchdvw.org or call (304) 348-1088.