FACT SHEET MEASLES

(Rubeola, Hard measles, Red measles, Morbilli)

What is measles?
Measles is an acute, highly communicable viral disease. Complications include diarrhea, ear infection, pneumonia, brain swelling and death.

Who gets measles?
Anyone, regardless of age, who has not had measles or has not been adequately immunized, may get the disease. Most cases occur in unimmunized preschoolers and young adults.

How is measles spread?
Measles is spread through the air by droplets from the nose, throat, and mouth of an infected person by coughing, sneezing, or simply talking.

How soon do infected people get sick?
The fever usually a start 7 - 18 days after infection, rash appears approximately 14 days after infection.

What are the symptoms of measles?
Measles causes a high fever, cough, runny nose, watery eyes, and a red rash that moves from the face to the rest of body. The symptoms may last from 1 - 2 weeks.

How long is an infected person able to spread measles?
An infected person is able to spread measles from 4 days before the rash starts to 4 days after the rash appears.

What should you do if you think you may be infected?
Call your healthcare provider and discuss your symptoms and any possible exposure before showing up at the clinic. The physician will advise you to either come to the clinic or arrange for you to be seen at a different location so other people are not exposed.

Can a person get measles again?
No. One attack of measles provides protection for life.

What is the treatment for measles?
There is no specific treatment for measles disease. Treating the symptoms such as a fever with Tylenol and itching with cool soaks may provide some relief. However, infants with high fever (>101.4) and children with headaches should be seen and treated by a doctor.

Should people who have been around a person infected with measles be treated?
Live measles vaccine provides permanent protection and may prevent disease if given within 72 hours of exposure. Immune globulin (IG) may prevent or modify disease if given within 6 days of exposure.

How can the spread of measles be stopped?
Vaccinate anyone who has not had measles or who has not had 2 measles vaccinations. Children require 2 doses for school entry. Adults born in and after 1957 also need vaccination, if they can not provide proof of 2 doses of vaccine, or the results of a blood test showing evidence of immunity.

Does measles vaccine cause reactions?
Adverse reactions following measles vaccination are generally mild and usually consist of fever and brief rash 5 - 12 days post vaccination. MMR vaccine does not contain thimerosol; there is no evidence that any vaccine causes autism or autism spectrum disorder. On rare occasions (1 in every million doses) a child may have a more serious reaction to MMR vaccine such as inflammation of the brain (encephalitis). MMR vaccine may be administered to egg-allergic children without prior routine testing or the use of special protocols.

Where can a person receive measles vaccine?
You may receive your vaccines from your doctor, your local public health clinic, WIC providers, or where your baby gets their well baby check-ups.