

Chief Health Officer Alert

Measles

26 March 2009

The Department has now been notified of 30 confirmed cases of measles in Melbourne since 7th January. Children or adults born during or since 1966 who do not have documented evidence of receiving two doses of a measles containing vaccine or documented evidence of laboratory confirmed measles are considered to be highly susceptible to measles.

Measles case definition

The public health definition for suspected measles is an illness with all of the following features:

- morbilliform rash; and
- cough; and
- fever present at the time of rash onset

Recommendations

1. **Be alert for new measles cases**—make sure all staff, particularly triage nurses, have a high index of suspicion for patients presenting with a febrile rash illness.
2. **Notify suspected measles cases immediately** to the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit on telephone **1300 651 160**.
3. **Take blood** for serological confirmation.
4. **Minimise the risk of measles transmission** within your department:
 - Avoid keeping patients with a febrile rash illness in waiting areas.
 - Isolate suspected cases within the department until a measles diagnosis can be excluded.
 - Leave vacant all consultation rooms used in the assessment of patients with suspected measles for at least 2 hours after the consultation.
5. **Seek advice from DHS regarding the management of susceptible contacts:**
 - On DHS advice, follow up all persons attending the Emergency Department at the same time as a case and for two hours after the visit. These people are considered to be exposed to the measles virus.
 - To prevent measles in susceptible contacts give:
 - MMR if within 72 hours of first contact with the patient, or
 - Immunoglobulin if longer than 72 hours but within 7 days from contact.
6. **Check your staff vaccination records**—Earlier outbreaks have affected health care workers, including some who have not been involved in the direct care of measles cases and have only been in the same ward or department as a case. All staff born since 1966 should have documentation of two doses of measles containing vaccine. (See DHS Health Care Worker Immunisation Policy at http://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/general/guide_hcw)

For further advice call the Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit on 1300 651 160.

Yours sincerely



Dr John Carnie
Chief Health Officer