



A Letter from the School Health Office

February 10, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Due to recent cases of measles across the nation and even in Illinois, the health offices of District 91 would like to increase your awareness of the virus while working together with you to protect the health and wellness of our community.

I have attached a measles information sheet for you to better understand the virus including how it is spread, signs and symptoms, etc. In the event that a case of measles was to be reported in our immediate community, parents of District 91 students would be informed immediately. Any unvaccinated student would be kept home for a minimum of 21 days, per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. Taking this precautionary measure helps to keep the chance of transmission low.

Please contact either the Milne Grove health office at 815-838-0542 Ext.106 for Mrs. Gilkerson, RN or the Kelvin Grove health office at 815-838-0737 Ext. 102. for Ms. Zweizig, RN, if you have any questions or concerns regarding immunizations.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Gilkerson, RN

Ms. Zweizig, RN

Dist. 91 School Nurses



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What is Measles?

Measles is a serious and highly contagious virus that affects the respiratory system, enabling the virus to be easily spread. This virus can cause a rash and high fever. It is extremely contagious and in some cases can be deadly.

What are the symptoms of Measles?

Symptoms of measles include a rash that starts on the face and neck and then spreads to the rest of body, a high fever, runny nose, diarrhea, ear infection, cough and red, watery eyes. The fever starts about 10 days (range 7 to 18 days) after exposure. The rash appears about 14 days after exposure.

Is it serious?

Measles can be dangerous, especially for infants and young children who have not yet been vaccinated. For some children, measles can lead to:

- Pneumonia
- Lifelong brain damage
- Deafness
- Death

How is it spread?

Measles is spread when a person infected with the measles virus breathes, coughs, or sneezes. The measles virus can live up to 2 hours on a surface or in an airspace where the infected person coughed or sneezed. You can catch measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, up to 2 hours after that person is gone. You can catch measles from an infected person 4 days before they have a rash and 4 days after the rash appears. Almost everyone who has not had the MMR vaccine will get measles if they are exposed to the measles virus. Measles is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected.

Complications



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Some people may suffer from severe complications, such as pneumonia and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). They may need to be hospitalized and death may occur.

Frequently Asked Questions from the CDC

Q. Has measles been eliminated from the United States?

A. Yes. In 2000, the U.S. declared that measles was eliminated from this country. The U.S. was able to eliminate measles because it has a highly effective measles vaccine, a strong vaccination program that achieves high vaccine coverage in children and a strong public health system for detecting and responding to measles cases and outbreaks.

Q. If measles is eliminated, why do people still get it in the United States?

A. Every year, measles is brought into the U.S. by unvaccinated travelers who get measles while they are in other countries. They can spread measles to other people who are not protected against measles, which sometimes leads to outbreaks. This can occur in communities with unvaccinated people.

Q. How effective is the measles vaccine?

A. The measles vaccine is very effective. One dose of measles vaccine is about 93% effective at preventing measles, if exposed to the virus and 2 doses is about 97% effective.

Q. Could I still get measles if I am fully vaccinated?

A. Very few people-about 3 out of 100-who get two doses of measles vaccine will still get measles if exposed to the virus. The good news is, fully vaccinated people who get measles are much more likely to have a milder illness, and they are also less likely to spread the disease to other people, including people who cannot get vaccinated because they are too young or have weakened immune systems.

Q. Is measles a concern in the United States?

A. Yes. Since measles is still common in many countries, this disease will continue to be brought into the U.S. Measles is highly contagious, so anyone who is not protected against measles is at risk of getting the disease. People who are unvaccinated for any reason, including those who refuse vaccination, risk getting infected with measles and spreading it to others, including those who cannot get vaccinated because they are too young or have specific health conditions.