



ACT
Government
Health

Dear Doctor

Two cases of measles diagnosed in ACT

Two cases of measles have been diagnosed in students of the Orana Steiner School in Weston. These pupils were infectious from about 12 and 14 November 2011 respectively.

It is likely that these students have been in close contact with unvaccinated friends or school-mates. Further transmission of measles has therefore potentially occurred.

Measles is highly communicable to non-immune people which includes those who are unvaccinated and have not had naturally acquired infection. Outbreaks of measles can persist for prolonged periods if cases are not rapidly identified to reduce the risk of transmission to susceptible people.

If patients present with symptoms and/or signs consistent with measles please obtain serology and a throat swab to confirm or exclude the diagnosis. Clinical diagnoses of measles must be notified by telephone to the Health Protection Service. This enables rapid identification of potential contacts who may benefit from post-exposure prophylaxis to reduce further transmission of this illness.

The incubation period for measles is between 7 and 18 days, typically being 10 days. A prodromal illness characterised by fever, conjunctivitis, cough and Koplik spots on the buccal mucosa lasts for about 4 days until the appearance of the rash typically about 14 days after exposure. People are infectious from 5 days before the appearance of the rash until 4 days after.

Post exposure prophylaxis with measles vaccine (within 3 days of exposure) or Normal Immunoglobulin (NIG, within 7 days) is effective in reducing the risk of developing disease. It is important for a person with confirmed measles, or who is suspected of having measles awaiting confirmation, to avoid contact with unvaccinated or immunosuppressed people until they are non-infectious. This includes exclusion from school or work for 4 days after the appearance of the rash. A fact sheet on measles is attached for your information.

To notify a case of measles or seek advice in relation to measles, please contact Health Protection Service on 6205 2155 or page the public health officer on call on 99624155 after hours.

Yours sincerely

Dr Paul Kelly
Chief Health Officer
23 November 2011