



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Division of the National Health Laboratory Service



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MEASLES



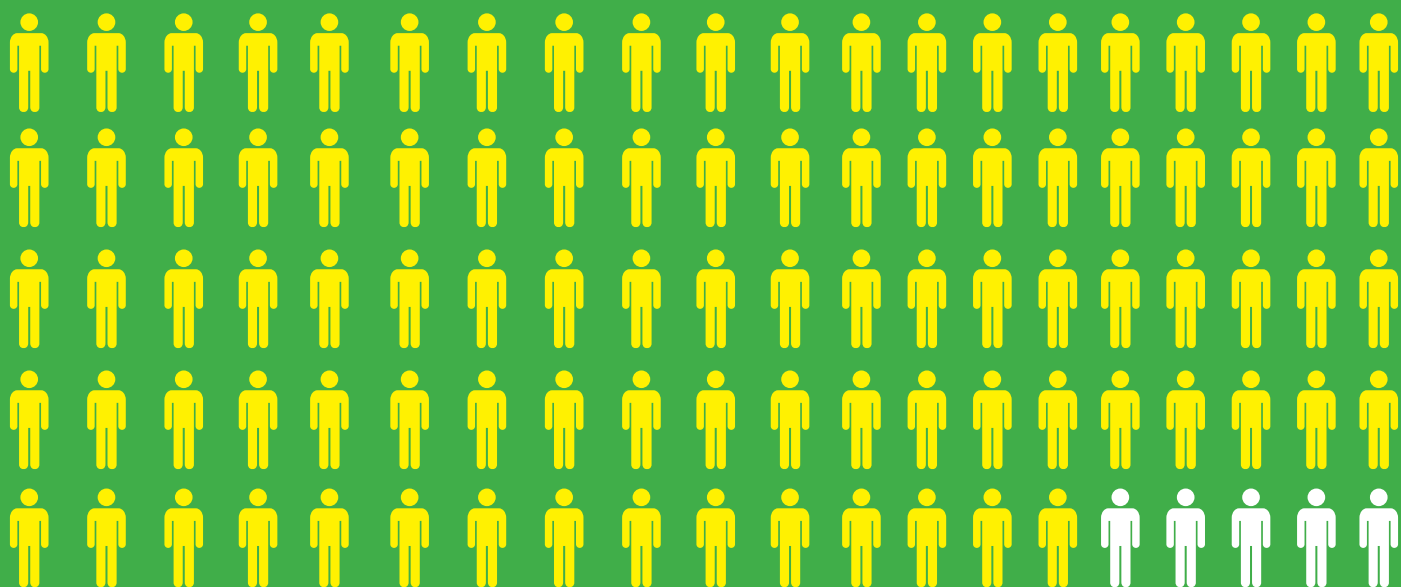
WHAT IS MEASLES?

- ▶ Measles is a highly contagious disease that infects the respiratory tract, then spreads throughout the body.
- ▶ The disease can lead to complications such as; diarrhea, dehydration, middle ear infection, brain infection (encephalitis), blindness and death.
- ▶ The complications are more serious in those who contract measles as young infants (under 2 years of age), in children who are malnourished and people who are immunosuppressed.

WHO CAN GET MEASLES?

- ▶ Any person who is not immune to measles can contract measles from an infected person.
- ▶ Immunity against the disease can be achieved through vaccination or contracting the virus.

COMMUNITIES BECOME **VULNERABLE TO A MEASLES OUTBREAK WHEN MORE THAN 5% OF PERSONS ARE NOT VACCINATED**





WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MEASLES?



High fever



Rash



Runny nose



Koplik spots
(White spots)
in the mouth



Conjunctivitis/
pink eye



Coughing

WHAT SHOULD ONE DO IF THEY SEE THESE SYMPTOMS?

- ▶ Measles is a highly contagious disease, as such persons who present the listed signs and symptoms are required to call a healthcare facility before visiting the facility.
- ▶ The healthcare practitioners will advise on the steps to follow to prevent the spread of the virus.



HOW IS MEASLES TRANSMITTED?

- ▶ Measles is transmitted through contact with an infected person's nasal or throat secretions.
- ▶ The virus is transmitted through the airborne route (coughing and sneezing). The tiny airborne particles can remain active and contagious for up to 12 hours in the air.

HOW IS MEASLES DIAGNOSED?

- ▶ Healthcare practitioners are able to diagnose a patient with measles based on the signs and symptoms associated with the disease.
- ▶ To verify this, a healthcare practitioner will take the patient's samples (blood and throat swabs/urine) for laboratory testing.



HOW IS MEASLES TREATED?



- There is no specific antiviral treatment for the measles virus. As such, treatment is aimed to improve symptoms and prevent complications.

This is achieved through supportive care which includes:



Good nutrition



Adequate fluid intake



Vitamin A supplements

Treating dehydration will restore Vitamin A levels of children infected with measles.



HOW IS MEASLES PREVENTED?

- Measles can be prevented through vaccination.
- The measles vaccine is included in the Expanded Program on Immunisations (EPI) schedule in South Africa and is given to all children at 6 months and 12 months of age.
- The measles vaccine is also available as a combination called measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine in the private sector and in military health care facilities.
- MMR is usually administered at 12 months and 18 months.

If a measles vaccine dose has been missed, it is never too late to catch up.

IS THE **MEASLES VACCINE** SAFE?

- ▶ The measles vaccine is safe and effective at preventing measles.
- ▶ The vaccine is much safer than contracting the disease.



COMMON SIDE EFFECTS OF THE MEASLES VACCINE:

- ▶ The measles vaccine, like any other vaccine can cause side effects, such as:



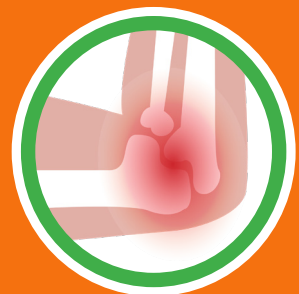
Sore arm



Fever



Mild rash



Temporary pain
and stiffness in the
joints



WHERE CAN I GET **MORE** INFORMATION?

Information relating to the child immunisation schedule can be accessed on the Department of Health's website at

<https://www.gov.za/services/child-care/child-immunisation>.

For queries relating to the disease, contact the Department of Health's call centre on **012-395-8000**.

A person with measles is infectious for four days before the rash appears and for four days after it appears. During this period, children should stay at home to prevent the spread of the disease.



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