



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Communicable Disease Control

17th June 2010

MEASLES ALERT FOR GP'S AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

The Department of Health is asking all health practitioners in WA to stay on alert for possible measles infections in persons presenting with febrile respiratory illnesses. This advice follows an earlier email circulated to GPs 8th June 2010 reporting two confirmed measles infections in Perth metropolitan area. A further three infections have been confirmed with illness onset dates between 6 – 10 June, 2010. All three of the most recent infections occurred in health care workers linked to the previous cases. It is possible that additional measles infections may appear in the community from exposures to these new cases in the coming weeks.

What WA Health Practitioners should do:

1. Consider measles in any patient who presents with a fever and rash. Measles is characterised by a morbilliform, non-pruritic rash (usually beginning on the head or neck), cough, and fever; other common symptoms include sore throat, fatigue, conjunctivitis and coryza.
2. Suspect patients should be placed in respiratory isolation (negative pressure room if available in a hospital emergency department) prior to and during assessment.
3. Undertake confirmatory testing in anyone with suspect measles.
 - a. Patients seen within 1 week of onset of rash should have respiratory (nose or throat swabs) and/or urine samples collected for PCR and culture, and clotted blood collected for serology (IgG and IgM).
 - b. Patients seen between 1 week and 3 weeks after the onset of rash should have clotted blood collected for serology and a respiratory and/or urine sample for PCR.
 - c. Mark the pathology request form "URGENT".
4. Notify the Communicable Disease Control Branch of the Health Department urgently by telephone 9388 4852 (office hours) or 9328 0553 (after hours), if you **suspect** a patient may have measles. Do not wait for laboratory confirmation before notifying a suspect case.
5. Advise all suspected or confirmed cases of measles to remain at home for at least four days after the appearance of the rash.

How to manage contacts of a measles case:

Providers should attempt to ensure that all persons exposed to a patient with measles are protected. A person can be considered to have presumptive evidence of immunity to measles if they meet one of the following criteria:

- Persons born during or since 1966 who have documented evidence of receiving 2 doses of a measles-containing vaccine when both doses have been given at \geq 12 months of age and at least 4 weeks apart (unless serological evidence indicates otherwise).
- Persons born before 1966.
- Documented definitive laboratory evidence of prior measles infection.
- Documented serologic evidence of immunity.

All other contacts should be considered susceptible. Susceptible individuals who are exposed to a measles case should be either:

1) **vaccinated with MMR** within 72 hours of contact with the case; or

2) **offered immunoglobulin** if less than 12 months old, immunocompromised, pregnant and not known to be immune, or if the contact is being seen more than 72 hours, but within seven days, after exposure to the case.

Note. People who attend the practice at the same time or within two hours after an infectious patient are at risk of infection and should be treated as contacts requiring follow-up.

How to minimise potential transmission at your surgery

- Avoid having suspected measles patients use the waiting room
- Conduct the consultation in a room that can be left for at least two hours after the consultation or examine the patient at the end of the day
- Examine the patient at home.

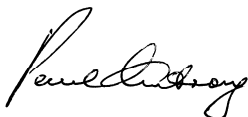
Prevention

Any individual who was born during or after 1966 without laboratory-evidence of immunity should have two documented doses of measles-containing vaccine to be considered immune to measles (usually as MMR vaccine).

Detailed information on measles for health care providers available at www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/336/3/measles.pm

If you have any queries please contact the Communicable Disease Control Directorate on 08 9388 4863.

Sincerely,



Dr. Paul Armstrong
Director
Communicable Disease Control Directorate

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