MEASLES

What is it?

Measles is caused by a virus. It has become quite rare in this country since the introduction of the MMR vaccination programme.

How do I know someone has it?

Measles usually begins with one or more of the following symptoms; a fever, conjunctivitis, a cough, and/or spots on the cheeks or in the mouth. 3 to 7 days later a red blotchy rash appears which spreads from the face. This rash lasts 4 to 7 days. The illness can be confirmed by a blood or saliva test.

Is it infectious?

Yes, measles is infectious from 1 day before the first symptom appears until 4 days after the onset of the rash. It is spread by direct contact with sneezing or coughing and sometimes by touching dirty handkerchiefs etc.

What is the incubation period?

It takes from 7 to 14 days from exposure to measles until onset of rash.

Is there any treatment?

There is no specific treatment for someone with measles. However, measles vaccine should be given to close contacts of the ill person if the contacts are not already immunised.

What should I do if someone has the illness?

- See a doctor but inform the surgery first that you are bringing someone whom you suspect has measles so they can put you in a side waiting room.
- The infected person should avoid contact with the following because measles can be more serious in them; persons or babies who have not been immunised, newborn babies and immunosuppressed people.
- The infected person should rest while they have the fever and rash.
- Keep them cool by reducing the amount of clothing or bedding and by giving paracetamol as prescribed on the bottle.
- Make sure hands are washed after touching or treating the spots.
  Ensure the ill person covers mouth when coughing and nose when sneezing.

How soon can someone return to school or work?

The person should stay away until 5 days after the onset of the rash.