

Measles

There has been a case of Measles in St. Peter's College and your child may have been exposed. If your child has had Measles or has received the Measles vaccine (part of the MMR vaccine), the chance of him/her developing Measles is extremely low. If your child has not had Measles and has not been vaccinated then it is quite possible that he/she will develop Measles.

What is Measles?

Measles is a viral illness that begins with a runny nose, chestiness and high temperature. After 1 to 2 days a reddish-brown measles rash appears. It begins around the head and neck and spreads over the rest of the body. It is a blotchy rash with the reddened areas often joining together so that large areas of skin look red. The whites of the eyes are usually reddened and irritated and the child is miserable. Symptoms develop about 8 to 12 days after exposure to an infectious person. The child with Measles is infectious for 3 to 5 days before and for up to 4 days after the rash appears.

Why should I be concerned about Measles?

Most healthy children get over Measles without any problems. Some develop complications such as ear infections or pneumonia. More rarely, a child with measles can develop an acute brain inflammation (encephalitis) that can lead to permanent brain damage. A very small number of children develop a lethal brain degeneration that only becomes evident 7 to 10 years after the acute illness.

What should I do now?

If your child is normally healthy and has been vaccinated against Measles there is no need to worry.

If your child has not been vaccinated, bring them for vaccination immediately. This will not guarantee that they will not catch Measles this time, but it will protect them from future exposures.

If your child has any weakness of their immune system (has had cancer or other immune related problems) let your doctor know immediately that he/she has been exposed to Measles.

What should I do if I think my child has Measles?

Contact your doctor and arrange for him/her to see the child and confirm the diagnosis. Ask the doctor to see your child at home; do not bring the child to the surgery, as this will just spread the infection further.

Can my child stay in school?

Most children with Measles are too sick to attend school. Even if your child does not seem too ill, it is important that they stay at home until at least 5 days after the rash appears. This will stop the infection spreading to other children.

How can I prevent Measles spreading in the family?

Anyone who has not had Measles or has not received the measles vaccine should go to the doctor to discuss vaccination.

Your doctor and local health clinic will be able to answer any further question that you might have about Measles and the Measles vaccine.

Resources: Useful information on measles can be found at <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/VaccinePreventable/Measles/>.