Measles Disease

What is measles disease?
- Measles is a serious viral respiratory illness that lives in the nose and throat mucus of infected people.
- A single case of measles will infect up to 95% of unvaccinated people who are exposed. One case is also expected to result in 12-18 additional cases.
- Up to 20-30% of infected people have complications from the disease, especially children less than 5 years of age or adults over 20 years of age.

What are the symptoms?
- Symptoms appear 7 to 14 days after a person is infected.
- Common early symptoms include:
  - High fever, up to 105°F
  - Cough
  - Runny nose
  - Red or watery eyes
- Two to three days after symptoms begin, you may have:
  - Tiny white spots appear inside of the mouth.
- Three to five days after symptoms begin, you could also have:
  - A rash of flat red spots appear on the face and spread to the neck, chest, arms, legs, and feet.
  - Small raised bumps may appear on the flat red spots.
- Common complications may include ear infections, hearing loss, and diarrhea.
- Severe complications may include pneumonia, swelling of the brain, and death.

How does measles disease spread?
- Measles is very contagious and may live up to 2 hours in the air or on surfaces after an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- People can spread measles to others four days before and four days after the rash appears.
- Measles is spread from person-to-person through
  - Coughing and sneezing
  - Touching items and surfaces the infected person has coughed or sneezed on.
- The best prevention against measles is receiving the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine.

Where can I find more information?
- Contact your doctor or pharmacist
- Go to the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at www.alabamapublichealth.gov/imm.
- Go to www.cdc.gov and type ‘measles disease’ in SEARCH box.
Measles Vaccine

Who should get measles vaccine?

• The first dose of the MMR vaccine is recommended for children at 12 through 15 months and the second dose at 4 through 6 years of age. Two doses are over 97% effective in preventing measles.
• If a person has not been vaccinated and is exposed to a case of measles, one dose of MMR within 72 hours of exposure reduces the chance of getting measles.
• Infants and children, students at post-high school institutions, and healthcare staff should get 2 doses of MMR.
• Adults born after 1956 should get at least one dose of MMR.
• Women of childbearing age should get at least one dose of MMR before getting pregnant if they do not have records of complete vaccination.
• International travelers should be up-to-date for MMR before traveling.

Who should not get MMR vaccine?

• Anyone who has had a life-threatening reaction to neomycin, any component of MMR vaccine, or to a previous dose.
• Anyone who has a weakened immune system such as those with cancer or on steroids for a long time.
• Pregnant women.
• Anyone with moderate to severe acute illness with or without fever. For more information on contraindications and precautions for MMR vaccine, please go to https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/mmr/hcp/recommendations.html.

What are the vaccine side effects and risks?

• Getting MMR vaccine is much safer than getting measles disease. MMR does not cause autism.
• Organizations like Autism Speaks, https://www.autismspeaks.org/, urge parents/guardians to vaccinate all children.
• While rare, a vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing side effects or allergic reactions.
• The most common side effects are mild and usually occur within two weeks of the vaccine. These include but are not limited to:
  o Soreness or redness or rash where the shot was given, fever, and swelling of glands in the neck or cheek.
• Moderate to severe problems include but are not limited to:
  o Seizures caused by fever, temporary pain or stiffness in the joints, temporary low platelet count, severe allergic reaction, and deafness.
• The risk of MMR vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Where can I find more information about mumps disease or mumps vaccine?

• Contact your doctor or pharmacist.
• Go to the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at www.alabamapublichealth.gov/imm.
• Go to www.cdc.gov and type in ‘measles vaccine’ in the SEARCH box.

Alabama Department of Public Health
Immunization Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104
1-800-469-4599   www.alabamapublichealth.gov/imm   4/26/19