

5th February 2010

Letter to all Primary and Post Primary School Principals re Measles outbreak

Dear Principal,

I am writing to inform you that Ireland is currently experiencing a measles outbreak. Over 150 cases have been reported to date in 2010. **Children and staff in your school may be at risk of measles.**

Vaccination with MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine is the only way to protect against measles; the first MMR dose should be given at 12 months of age, and the second dose at 4-5 years of age (either by school vaccination teams or by GP). The school programme will be recommencing in the following months in those areas where it was recently delayed due to the swine flu vaccination programme.

Those children who are not vaccinated are at risk of measles and also put other children and non-immune staff in your school at risk of measles.

Recommended Action:

1. Please communicate with the parents and staff that
 - a. A national measles outbreak is occurring
 - b. Non-immune children /staff are at risk of measles themselves
 - c. Non-immune children/staff put others in the school at risk
 - d. All children are recommended to have two doses of MMR vaccine and parents should ensure their child's vaccinations are up to date.
2. If you become aware of any measles or suspect measles case (details overleaf) in your school, please inform your local Department of Public Health (http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Public_Health/) immediately so that outbreak control measures can be implemented.
3. Any staff member who thinks they may be at risk of measles (never had measles or a measles containing vaccine) should speak with their GP about vaccination.

Thank you for your assistance in this important public health issue.

Yours sincerely



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MEASLES INFORMATION

What is measles?

- Measles is a highly infectious serious disease characterised by high fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes (conjunctivitis) and a generalised red rash that starts on head and moves down the body.
- Anyone with measles is infectious from 4 days before to 4 days after rash onset.
- Direct contact with a case is not needed for measles transmission to occur – airborne transmission of the virus (from coughing and sneezing) makes measles one of the most infectious viruses known to man.
- Approximately 30% of measles cases have been hospitalised in this outbreak, and two children have required intensive care treatment. Fortunately there have been no deaths reported so far.

How can measles be prevented?

- Vaccination with MMR vaccine is the only way to protect against measles
- The first MMR dose should be given at 12 months of age, and the second dose at 4-5 years of age
- Unless medically contraindicated, all children 6 years and older should have already received two doses of MMR vaccine.
- All staff born since 1978 who are not immune (either as a result of previous infection or vaccination) are at risk of measles during this outbreak.
- If staff become infected they could infect children in the school, fellow staff or their own family.