MEASLES ALERT

Information for NSW General Practitioners

Please distribute this information to all staff

1. Cases of measles continue to be imported into NSW from overseas
2. Locally-acquired cases have begun to occur and more are likely in the coming weeks.
3. Suspect measles in those presenting with fever and rash irrespective of travel history
4. Isolate suspected cases immediately and call the public health unit

Measles in NSW
- Since December 2018, 23 cases of measles have been notified in NSW
- Several cases have spent time in busy public places such as hospitals, shopping centres, and backpacker hostels while infectious.
- At highest risk are those who are too young to be vaccinated (<12 months), and those who have not received two doses of measles containing vaccine.
- Suspect measles in people with fever and rash irrespective of travel history.

How does measles present?
- Two to four days of non-specific illness with fever, cough, coryza, and conjunctivitis.
- A maculo-papular rash then typically begins on the face and neck and becomes generalised.
- Cases have occurred in people reporting prior vaccination – these tend to present atypically, with short or absent prodrome, milder fever and less rash – maintain a high index of suspicion for measles in vaccinated patients if exposure to earlier cases is possible
- Measles cases are infectious from the day before the onset of non-specific symptoms to 4 days after the onset of rash.

How to manage suspected cases
- Isolate - arrange to see suspected cases in their homes or at the end of the day.
- Notify - call your local public health unit (PHU) on 1300 066 055 immediately – don’t wait for test results before calling. The earlier a PHU knows about a suspected case the more effective containment interventions can be.
- Test - collect a nose and throat viral swab and a first pass urine sample for nucleic acid testing, and blood for measles IgG and IgM. Mark specimens as URGENT. Your PHU can assist in expediting testing.

Advocate for immunisation
- Vaccinate children on-time at 12 and 18 months of age.
- Infants travelling overseas can be vaccinated as early as 9 months of age – if vaccinated prior to 11 months of age two additional doses will be required to ensure long-term protection
- Measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) is safe and available free in NSW for those born during or after 1966 who have not previously had two documented doses
- Discuss vaccination with your adult patients – overseas travel is an opportunity to catch-up MMR.
- Ensure that you and your staff are vaccinated.

Further Information:
- Contact your local public health unit on 1300 066 055

Dr Vicky Sheppeard
Health Protection NSW

28 March 2019