



## Disease Tool 8

### Measles

Measles is a very contagious virus that can make children very sick. In a community where no one is vaccinated, one person with measles can infect between 12 and 18 other people.

#### Transmission

- Coughing, sneezing or close personal contact (infected droplets in the air are breathed in by another person).
- Direct contact with infected nose or throat mucus.

#### Symptoms

- Can start with high fever, runny nose, cold, cough, red and watery eyes and sometimes white spots inside the mouth.
- After a few days, a flat red blotchy rash appears, usually starting on the head, face and upper neck, and continues to spread to the rest of the body.
- In severe cases, measles can cause blindness, encephalitis (an infection that causes brain swelling), severe diarrhoea and dehydration, ear infections, or severe respiratory infections such as pneumonia.

#### Prevention

- Routine vaccination of children.
- Mass vaccination campaigns with social mobilization in countries where the disease is common and causes many deaths.
- Rapid detection and referral of suspected cases to health facilities.
- Reduced overcrowding in shelters.
- Improved ventilation in shelters.
- Separation of people sick with measles for four days after they develop a rash.
- Coughing etiquette (cough into sleeve, handkerchief or tissue, NOT the hand).
- Handwashing with soap.
- Social mobilization and behaviour change communication.

#### If an epidemic occurs

- Rapidly detect and refer suspected cases to health facilities.
- Support mass vaccination campaigns and social mobilization for them.
- Provide vitamin A supplements for children with measles who are between 6 months and 5 years of age.
- Isolate people sick with measles for four days after they develop a rash.
- Promote handwashing with soap.
- Reduce overcrowding in shelters.
- Improve ventilation in shelters.
- Promote coughing etiquette (cough into sleeve, handkerchief or tissue, NOT the hand).
- Increase social mobilization and behaviour change communication.
- Monitor for malnutrition.

### Vulnerable people

- Children who are not vaccinated, especially those who are poorly nourished or have vitamin A deficiency.
- Adults aged more than 20 years old.
- Pregnant women.
- Displaced populations and those living in cramped or crowded conditions.
- People whose immune systems are compromised (for example, by leukaemia or HIV infection).

### Volunteer actions

See the following action tools for more information on how to take action against measles:



### Community-based assessment

Make a map of the community and mark the information you gather on the map. Record other details.

- When did people start to fall sick with measles?
- How many people have fallen sick with measles? Where?
- How many people have died? Where?
- How many people live in the affected community or area? How many children under 5 years of age live in the area?
- Who and where are the vulnerable people?
- Are children under 5 most affected? Or are other age groups, occupations, etc., more affected?
- Are children in the affected community generally well nourished?
- Do people always have enough food?
- How common is breastfeeding?
- Are children in the affected community vaccinated for measles or not?
- Is a vaccination campaign planned?
- Do strong cultural beliefs or perceptions about vaccination prevent children from being vaccinated?
- Where are the local health facilities and services? (Include traditional and community carers.)
- What are the community's habits, practices and beliefs about caring for and feeding sick people? Do mothers continue to breastfeed babies and infants when they are sick?
- Is a social mobilization or health promotion programme in place?
- Which sources of information do people use most?
- Are rumours or is misinformation about the disease spreading in the community?

