



Leumit 

CRITICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEASLES OUTBREAK

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There is currently a serious outbreak of measles in Ramat Beit Shemesh and Eretz Yisrael which can quickly spread to those who have not yet been vaccinated.

Measles is extremely contagious but easily prevented. Prior to the development of the vaccine, the disease killed over two million people each year. Annually, approximately 110,000 people continue to die from the disease worldwide. Measles is spread via air droplets if someone infected with measles breathes, coughs or sneezes. The air remains infected for two hours in an enclosed area.

Symptoms of measles include an eye infection, cold-like symptoms, cough, fever and a red-splotchy rash that spreads from head to toe. The majority of measles patients will be extremely ill for about a week and up to 30% will suffer some sort of complication of the disease such as dehydration, pneumonia or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Typically, one out of a thousand cases of measles will die.

Measles is extremely contagious. 90% of people exposed will contract the disease unless they have been vaccinated or they previously contracted the virus.

The measles virus has no treatment or cure. Those at increased risk of contracting the disease include infants who are too young to have been immunized and individuals who never received the vaccine. In addition, pregnant women, people who are undergoing chemotherapy or those who have received an organ transplant, are at greater risk.

Immunization is the only proven method to prevent a person

from acquiring measles. A single dose of the MMR vaccine is 93% effective against measles and two doses is 97% effective. The first vaccine is given at one-year of age and the second in first grade.

If an unvaccinated person is exposed to the virus, he must receive the vaccine within 72 hours in order to not to develop symptoms. (The vaccine is available at Tipat Chalav.) If a baby under six months of life is exposed, he is too young to receive the vaccine. Instead, he must receive immunoglobulins within six days of exposure.

A discussion about measles would be remiss without talking about the blatantly false correlation that has been made between the MMR vaccine and autism. The suggestion that the MMR vaccine leads to autism had its origins in a research paper written by Dr. Andrew Wakefield of England and published in the Lancet Journal in 1998. It was later found that the study was severely flawed and was being funded by lawyers who were already suing vaccine manufacturers. As a result of Dr. Wakefield's illegal and fraudulent work, he lost his medical license and the journal retracted the article. Sadly, the real damage he did was to place false fears in the hearts of millions of mothers who became hesitant without cause to vaccinate their children against measles.

Measles is a virus that is easily prevented and does not have a cure once contracted. It is, therefore, our duty as concerned parents and responsible community members to vaccinate our children so that this deadly disease will cease spreading and the epidemic will be brought under control.