What is Measles?
Measles is a serious and highly infectious vaccine preventable viral illness.

Measles is spread through the air and via small droplets that contain the virus particles when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. It can also be spread via direct and indirect contact with infected nasal and throat secretions. The virus can remain in the environment for up to two hours.

How long does a person remain infectious?
An infected person is contagious for approximately five days before the onset of rash and for four days after the rash has appeared. This may be a lot longer in people who are immunocompromised (i.e. receiving treatment for cancer).

The time from infection to the appearance of the red blotchy rash is usually 14 days after exposure to the virus.

What are the symptoms of measles?
Symptoms include:
- flu like symptoms e.g. high fever, cough, runny nose
- conjunctivitis
- malaise, general discomfort
- a flat red blotchy rash with small bumps that begins on the face and spreads down all over the body
- bluish - white spots may develop on the inside of the cheek, mouth and throat

What are the complications of measles?
Measles is more severe in the very young, chronically ill and those that are immunocompromised. Possible complications are:
- middle ear infections
- diarrhoea and vomiting
- inflammation of the voice box
- pneumonia
- respiratory infections
- encephalitis
- pregnancy problems, risk of miscarriage or premature labour
- death

How can we stop the spread of measles?
Immunisation is the best protection against measles and part of the routine Australian childhood vaccination program.
Measles
Infection Prevention

People who receive two lifetime doses of measles-containing vaccine are protected, as are people born prior to 1966. People born during or before 1966 are likely to have had natural measles infection and will have lifelong immunity.

Infection prevention and control measures focus on minimizing the spread of the virus. Strategies include:

Isolation: Whilst infectious you will be cared for in a single room with the door closed at all times. Health care workers will put on gowns, gloves and mask. This is to protect them and to reduce the likelihood of spread to other patients that they are caring for.

Procedures and diagnostic tests: Whilst you are infectious, should you need to leave your room for any procedures/tests, there may be changes in schedules to ensure that other patients are not exposed to the virus.

What can you do?
- cover your nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing
- where possible, cough into your elbow, not your hands
- wash your hands
- wear a mask when leaving your room
- remain in your room or home until no longer contagious.

What do my visitors need to do?

Visitors must wear an appropriate mask and be shown by a healthcare worker how to put this on. Visitors who do not know their immune status to measles or have incomplete vaccination should not visit.

To be fully vaccinated, people need to receive two doses of a measles containing vaccine at least 4 weeks apart.

Your visitors should clean their hands by using alcohol based hand rub or soap and water when caring for you, and when leaving your room.

If you have measles, your visitors should avoid visiting other patients.

Any questions?
If you would like further information about Measles, contact Alfred Health Infection Prevention on (03) 9076 3139.

Further information:
Better Health Channel
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
National Safety & Quality
www.safetyandquality.gov.au/