

## Screening Guide for Potential Infectious Diseases (e.g. Measles)

### For Administrative/Reception Staff

**Purpose:** To identify patients who may have measles and to triage them for a telephone consultation with a doctor instead scheduling of an in-person appointment.

This guide is most relevant for patients under 25 years of age as this group is at higher risk of getting measles

The guide will be **most** relevant if there are known cases of measles circulating in the area.

A case of measles coming into the surgery would be very disruptive to the normal functioning of the practice. This guide aims to reduce the risk of a case of measles in your premises. Please feel free to adapt this guide to best suit your practice.

### Answering machine/Voice queuing system message options

"Hello, this is **[insert practice name]**. We are aware that there has been an increase in Measles cases in Ireland in the local area. Measles is a serious illness and cases. We want to protect our patients and it is important that we safely manage people coming to the practice who may have measles. Please speak with the receptionist if you think you or your child might have measles.

*For practices who use automated call management there is the option to include the following:*

"Push one for more information on measles, otherwise please stay on the line and your call will be answered"

"Children under six who have had one MMR vaccine on/after their first birthday are considered immune.

People who have had two MMR vaccines four or more weeks from their first birthday, apart are considered immune to measles

People born **in Ireland** prior to 1978 are also considered immune"

Those who are NOT immune who have contact with a case of measles or who have travelled overseas are at risk of measles.

Symptoms of measles include a fever, new cough, runny nose, new rash or red eyes?

Please stay on the line and your call will be answered"



## Initial Greeting and Confirmation

- **Greet the patient:** "Good [morning/afternoon], thank you for calling [practice name]. How can I help you today?"
- **Confirm identity:** eg "Can I please have your full name, date of birth, and contact number?"

## Measles information for reception staff

Children aged 5 years & younger	Immune if one vaccine has been given at 12 months of age or older
People aged 6 years & older	Immune if two vaccines have been given (at least 4 weeks apart) from 12 months onwards
People born in Ireland prior to 1978	This group is considered immune

If people are not known to be immune, they should be advised to speak with the doctor about getting an MMR vaccine

Those who are considered immune can be **scheduled for an appointment as per normal practice policy**.

If the patient suspects they are not immune to measles, or if they mention symptoms such as a rash or fever, or if they have been in contact with someone who has measles or if reception staff have any reason to suspect measles, ask the following questions. If the voice queuing message is not used, the following questions can also be used.

## Immunity

- a) "Have you/child had two previous MMR vaccines?"  
Children under six who have had one MMR vaccine are also considered immune
- b) "Were you born in Ireland prior to 1978?"

If the patient answers "**yes**" to either, they are considered immune and can be **scheduled for an appointment as per normal practice policy**

## Symptoms of measles

If they are **not considered immune proceed to questions 1, 2 and 3:**

### Fever and Rash

1. "Are you experiencing a fever, new cough, runny nose, new rash or red eyes?"

### Recent Exposure:

2. "Have you been in contact with anyone who has recently been diagnosed with or suspected of having measles?"
3. "Have you travelled overseas in the last 21 days?"



## Decision-Making Based on Responses

**If the patient answers 'Yes' to any of questions 1 or 2 or 3:**

- **Do not schedule an in-person appointment at this time.**
- **Explain the situation calmly:** "Thank you for the information. Based on what you've told me, it's important that we limit exposure to others just in case you might have measles. I'll arrange for a doctor to call you as soon as possible to discuss your symptoms and the next steps. Please keep your phone nearby. You may be called from a private/blocked number. A doctor will contact you [insert estimated time for a response]"
- If there are other people who are not immune to measles at home who have had household contact with you/your child they should also go home and isolate from others until further discussion with the doctor"
- If there is a suspicion of an emergency, discuss the case with a GP

**If the patient answers 'No' to all parts of questions 1, 2 and 3:**

- Proceed with normal appointment scheduling procedures.

## Recording Information

- **Document the patient's responses** in the medical record or triage system
- **Note should state:** "Potential measles – scheduled for doctor telephone consultation."

## Follow-Up Actions

- **Inform the doctor** of any patient with potential infectious disease symptoms.

## Important Notes

- **Maintain confidentiality** at all times
- **Reassure the patient** and offer support while minimizing the risk to others.

## About measles

Measles is an extremely contagious viral infection. It spreads easily through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and the virus can linger in the air and on surfaces for up to two hours. If one person has measles, up to 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected. Due to its highly contagious nature, it's critical to identify potential measles cases early and minimize exposure by arranging for telephone consultations instead of in-person visits whenever possible.

**If uncertain**, always err on the side of caution and arrange a telephone consultation.

**Thank you for your attention to detail in helping us keep our patients and community safe!**