Measles – basic facts about the disease

- **The symptoms of measles are:**
  An elevated temperature with a generalised rash lasting for longer than 3 days. Catarrhal symptoms, i.e. a temperature of over 38°C and one or more of the following symptoms: cough, runny nose, Koplik’s spots on the buccal membrane in the mouth (light spots with a reddened edge), conjunctivitis and a typical “facies morbillosa” facial appearance – the face of a crying child, appear approximately 4 days before the rash appears. The rash is purple-red, it usually begins at the back of the head or behind the ears, within 4 days the rash becomes generalised – it spreads the face, neck, abdomen and limbs. The rash disappears gradually in the same order, from the head, then the torso and from the limbs. Complications of measles include pneumonia, middle ear infection or disorders of the central nervous system.

- **Cause of the disease:** measles virus.

- **Source of the disease:** only infected people are the source of the disease.

- **Incubation period:** usually lasts between 7 and 21 days.

- **Infectious period:** begins on the day before the prodromal symptoms appear, usually 4 days before the rash appears, and ends within four days after the rash appears; infection with this disease confers lifelong immunity.

- **Infection:**
  Measles is one of the most highly infectious diseases, it spread very easily through airborne infection; infection spreads through respiratory droplets discharged by infected people, rarely also through the air or by contaminated items. The existence of pockets of people who have not been vaccinated and pockets of people of whom at least 95% have not been vaccinated with two doses of the measles vaccine, which is essential to achieve so-called collective immunity, contribute to the spread of this disease. If there are multiple such pockets within a specific group of people or region, this creates suitable conditions for the virus to spread through the population and possibly for the origin of an epidemic.

- **Measures and therapy**
  - Inoculation is the only preventive measure possible.
  - If a person becomes ill with this disease the patient must be quarantined for a period of 7 days after the rash appears (according to Appendix No. 2 to Decree No. 306/2012 Sb., as amended).
  - The therapy for uncomplicated progress of this disease is so-called symptomatic therapy, i.e. bed-rest, lowering an elevated temperature, sufficient fluid intake. Complications of this disease with bacterial super-infection require treatment with antibiotics, the most serious complications may even require treatment at the intensive care unit.

If you suspect that you have measles, you must be considerate of others – stay at home and do not spread the disease further. Contact your physician and proceed according to his instructions.

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