

Dear Parents,

We have received information from the WCED about the “Campaign to Eradicate Measles and Polio” and, after consulting medical opinion, agreed to send out the information below:

“Officials of the National Department of Health will be visiting RBPS between March and May 2010 as part of a campaign to mass immunise all children from 0 to 15 years against polio and measles. In order to fully eradicate Polio & Eliminate Measles we need the community to partner together with the Department of Health. The rate of measles has escalated dramatically in the last few months. Measles is not an innocent childhood disease as is often the perception but is a viral infection that can have horrible complications including blindness, hearing problems, brain damage, pneumonia and even death.

Many of your children may have received one or two doses of measles vaccine during their first two years. Those doses work in about 9 out of 10 children. Outbreaks may still occur amongst those that were not immunised or amongst those in whom the vaccine was not effective, usually because the cold chain was inadvertently broken and temperature protocols in transit or in storage were not strictly adhered to.

How do Vaccines Work?

Vaccines protect in two ways: by activating specific individual immunity which prevents disease and, if enough individuals are immunised, by increasing population immunity which prevents spread of the disease.

Is the Measles Vaccine Safe?

The measles vaccine is considered safe. Hundreds of millions of doses of measles vaccine have now been given. Because the measles vaccine is "live", it can cause mild measles-like symptoms in some recipients, but it does not cause the measles disease.

What Side-effects can be expected?

Fever is the most common side effect of the measles vaccine, occurring in 5%-15% of vaccine recipients. About 5% of persons develop a mild rash which is not infectious. When they occur, fever and rash appear 7-12 days after vaccination. Up to 10% of our children may have some localised swelling, tenderness and redness over the vaccine site. Serious side effects from the vaccines are very rare – a lot rarer than the serious side effects of the disease itself.

Anyone who has had two or more doses of the measles vaccine can safely have another. So can those who have had measles infection. Side effects are less common in those who already had a dose of this vaccine.

Who should not receive this vaccine?

The measles vaccine is a live vaccine and it should not be given to children who are severely immunocompromised with conditions such as congenital immunodeficiency, AIDS, leukemia, lymphoma, generalized malignancy or who are currently receiving treatment for cancer with chemotherapy, radiation, or high dose corticosteroids. If your

son falls into any of these categories then please do not consent to the vaccine being administered. The current recommendation is that persons with HIV infection without symptoms can and should be vaccinated against measles. Egg allergy is not a contra-indication to the measles vaccine but an allergy to the antibiotic Neomycin (which is very rare) is a contra indication.

What about the rumoured Autism Link?

The current available epidemiologic evidence does not support a causal link between MMR vaccine or the measles vaccine and autism. The boys will be getting the measles vaccine and not the MMR and our boys are well beyond infancy when autistic symptoms start to appear. We do not see autistic type symptoms presenting for the first time in the Prep school age group.

The boys at Little Bosch, under five years of age, will be given polio drops as well as the measles vaccine in April 2010 as part of this immunisation campaign. The polio drops will be repeated in May 2010.”

What to do...

Please complete the consent form below and sign it. Then send it back to the school via you son’s class teacher as soon as possible or by Friday 12 March.

CONSENT FORM : Campaign to Eradicate Measles and Polio

Please print son’s name and surname: _____

Birth date: _____ Month: _____ Year: _____ CLASS _____

School: RONDEBOSCH BOYS’ PREPARATORY SCHOOL

I understand the information about the vaccine.

I consent to the measles and polio immunisation YES/NO (PLEASE CIRCLE CHOICE) of my child during the immunisation campaign in April and May 2010.

Signature (parent/legal guardian): _____ Date: _____

Parent / guardian’s name (please print): _____