



本署檔號 Our Ref. : (8) in DH SEB CD/8/35/1 Pt. 2

24 April 2015

Person-in-charge  
Employment Agencies

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Encourage Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccination  
for foreign domestic helpers**

We would like to inform you that there has been an increase in measles infections in Hong Kong since 2013. Recent increase in measles cases has also been observed in neighbouring areas such as Mainland China, Japan, the Philippines and Singapore. You may wish to know that some of these measles patients are foreign domestic helpers. They might have contracted the illness in their home countries or locally.

Measles infection is a highly infectious and severe viral infection that may affect any person who is not immune to the infection. Affected persons may develop fever and rash for one to two weeks and recover. In severe cases, middle ear, lungs and brain can get involved and lead to serious consequences or even death.

Immunisation against measles is the most effective preventive measure. In Hong Kong, measles vaccine is given in combination with the mumps and rubella vaccines, named as Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine\*, to children at 1 year old and Primary One. Over 95% of the locally born people in Hong Kong are immune to this infection through vaccination or natural infection when they are young. However, we are aware that some foreign domestic helpers may not have had measles immunisation before they arrive in Hong Kong. If they get infected with measles in Hong Kong, they may pass the



infection to their friends and relatives, their employers and their families, especially infants who have not yet received vaccination. To prevent measles infection and transmission in the community, we would like to enlist your help to inform potential employers and foreign domestic helpers of the risk of measles and advise foreign domestic helpers to get immunised if they have not done so, preferably before they arrive in Hong Kong.

We are also aware that some employment agencies may arrange pre-employment medical checkup for the foreign domestic helpers. If your agency is also providing this service, we would be most grateful if you could consider adding MMR vaccination as one of the items to be provided to the foreign domestic helpers in the medical checkup package. MMR vaccination is available in most private health clinics.

Furthermore, receiving MMR vaccine can also prevent rubella and mumps infection. Rubella infection in pregnant women may pose risk to the foetus. Please refer to the attached leaflet for more information on these three infections.

If you have any queries related to this letter, please contact Ms Tracy Ho at tel: 2125 2235. Thank you very much in advance for your help. We hope that you will join us as partners in maintaining the health of the community.



(Dr Vivian CHAN)  
for Director of Health

\*Department of Health incorporated the “Varicella Vaccine – First Dose” into the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme for children at one year old starting 2 July 2014. Department of Health will provide the “MMRV Vaccine (Measles, Mumps, Rubella & Varicella) - Second Dose” to Primary One children who had received the “Varicella Vaccine – First Dose” and use it in place of the “MMR Vaccine (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) – Second Dose”.



## **Foreign domestic workers are advised to receive measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination**

The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health of Hong Kong recorded a relatively higher proportion of measles among foreign domestic workers this year. Measles infection is a highly infectious and severe viral infection that may affect any person who is not immune to the infection. Infected persons may pass the infection to their friends and relatives, their employers and their families, especially infants who have not yet received vaccination. We are aware that some foreign domestic helpers may not have had measles immunisation before they arrive in Hong Kong. Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine is a very effective vaccine to prevent measles, mumps and rubella infections. To protect themselves and others, we urge foreign domestic workers to receive MMR vaccination as soon as possible.

### **Measles**

Measles is caused by the measles virus and spread by droplet or direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons, and less commonly, by articles soiled with nose and throat secretions. Affected persons will present initially with tiredness, fever, cough, red eyes and white spots inside the mouth. This is followed by a red blotchy skin rash 3-7 days later. The rash usually spreads from the face down to the rest of the body. In severe cases, middle ear, lungs and brain can get involved and lead to serious consequences or even death.

### **Mumps**

Mumps is caused by the Mumps virus which affects the salivary glands and sometimes the nerve tissue. It is spread by droplet and direct contact with the saliva of an infected person. The disease is characterized by painful swelling of the salivary glands, usually at the cheek(s), and fever. Sometimes, there may be complications like deafness, or infection of the brain. Adolescents might develop infection of the testicles or ovaries, which can affect fertility.

## **Rubella**

Rubella, also known as “German Measles”, is caused by Rubella virus. It can be transmitted by contact with secretions from nose and pharynx of infected persons through droplet spread or direct contact with patients. Symptoms are usually mild. Children usually present with fever, headache, diffuse rash and enlargement of lymph nodes behind the ears or in the neck. Sometimes there may be no symptoms at all. Complications include arthritis, thrombocytopenia and encephalitis.

Rubella infection produces anomalies in the developing fetus. Congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) is likely to occur in infants born to women who got infected during the first 3 months of pregnancy. CRS is characterised by deafness, blindness, heart malformations and mental retardation.

## **Prevention**

MMR vaccine can effectively prevent these three diseases. In Hong Kong, children are routinely given the MMR vaccine at age one, followed by a second dose at Primary One. Over 95% of locally born people in Hong Kong have already received the vaccine. Despite the high coverage rates, persons who have not received the vaccine may still get infected as measles, mumps and rubella are highly infectious.

To prevent infection and transmission in the community, we advise foreign domestic helpers to get immunised if they have not done so, preferably before they arrive in Hong Kong. If this is not possible, they can consult family doctor after they have arrived in Hong Kong. Anybody with symptoms compatible with measles, mumps or rubella should seek medical care promptly.

For more information on MMR vaccination, please visit the Family Health Service's website: [http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health\\_info/child/486.html](http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/health_info/child/486.html)

Centre for Health Protection

Department of Health

Updated in April 2015

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