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To Employers of foreign domestic helpers

Dear Sir/Madam,

Vaccination of foreign domestic helpers against measles

We would like to enlist your support to encourage measles vaccination for your foreign domestic helpers (FDH) to protect them and the local community against measles.

Measles is a vaccine preventable disease that remains common in many parts of the world. As global measles vaccination rates still fall short of pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels, cases have risen significantly in North America and Europe in recent months, affecting mainly unvaccinated individuals. In some Southeast Asian countries where measles is prevalent such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, thousands of cases were reported in the past six months.

With the consistently high measles vaccination coverage in Hong Kong, the risk of large-scale local outbreak is considered low at present. However, in the wake of measles resurgence worldwide, it is possible that some FDH who are not fully vaccinated may get infected in their home country and pass the infection to their employers and their families, especially infants who are not yet due for measles vaccination.

To safeguard the health of your family members against measles infection and possible transmission in the community, it is prudent to inform your FDH who will come to work in Hong Kong to get immunised in their home country prior to their arrival in Hong Kong. In general, people can be considered as non-immune to measles if they

- (i) did not have the infection confirmed by laboratory test before, and
- (ii) have not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines in the past, or have unknown vaccination status or unknown immunity against measles.



You are advised to request your FDH to produce documented evidence of immunity against measles or proof of receipt of two doses of measles-containing vaccine. Any FDH who are non-immune to measles should receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine before they come to Hong Kong.

Some employment agencies may arrange pre-employment medical check-up for FDH. You are strongly advised to consult your agency and consider the addition of assessment of the immune status against measles for your FDH. If your FDH is non-immune, please advise them to complete their vaccination if they have not done so. Measles vaccination is available in most private health clinics in Hong Kong.

There is no monovalent measles vaccine available in Hong Kong. The measles-containing vaccine to be used is Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine which can also prevent rubella and mumps infections. Rubella infection in pregnant woman may pose risk to the foetus. Please refer to the attached leaflet for more information on these three diseases.

We hope you will join us as partners in strengthening our efforts to protect the health of our community against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



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Foreign domestic helpers are advised to receive Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination

Measles is a highly infectious and severe viral infection that may affect any person who is not immune. Rubella may cause anomalies in the developing foetus (“congenital rubella syndrome”) if women are infected during the first three months of pregnancy. Persons infected with measles or rubella may pass the infection to their friends and relatives, their employers and their household members, especially infants who have not yet received vaccination. We are aware that some foreign domestic helpers may not have had measles and rubella immunisation in their home country before they arrive in Hong Kong. Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine to prevent measles, mumps and rubella infections. To protect themselves and others, we urge foreign domestic helpers to receive MMR vaccination.

In general, people can be considered as non-immune to measles/rubella if (i) they did not have the infection confirmed by laboratory test before, and (ii) they had not been fully vaccinated against measles/rubella, or have unknown vaccination status or unknown immunity against measles. **To prevent infection and transmission in the community, we advise all foreign domestic helpers who are non-immune to either measles or rubella to receive MMR vaccine before they arrive in Hong Kong.**

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

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 characterised by fever and painful swelling of the salivary glands (usually at the cheeks). 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 three months of pregnancy. CRS is characterised by deafness, blindness, heart malformations and mental retardation.

Centre for Health Protection

Department of Health

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