

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (61) in DH SEB CD/8/35/1 Pt.3

March 4, 2019

Person-in-charge
Employment Agencies

Dear Sir/Madam,

Vaccination of foreign domestic helpers against measles

We would like to draw your attention to the recent increase in measles cases in some Southeast Asian countries especially the Philippines, and enlist your help to promote measles vaccination among foreign domestic helpers (FDH) for protecting them and the local community against measles.

Measles is a highly infectious disease and can potentially lead to severe complications or even deaths, in particular among infants and other high-risk individuals. Infection during pregnancy may increase the risk of miscarriage, preterm delivery or even stillbirth.

Measles remains a common disease in many parts of the world, including some Southeast Asian countries. In the Philippines, a total of 18 407 measles cases were recorded in 2018, a nearly 8-fold increase as compared with 2 428 cases in 2017. This ongoing outbreak has further deteriorated in the past two months with 12 736 cases including 203 deaths recorded nationwide in 2019 (as of February 24), according to the information from the health authority of the Philippines. About two-third of the cases had not received measles vaccination. Likewise, according to data from the World Health Organization, as of January 9, 2019, the 12-month measles incidence (number of cases per million population) reached 83.9, 62.8, 49.6 and 16.2 in Malaysia, Thailand, India and Indonesia respectively. The above figures greatly exceed the measles incidence in Hong Kong in 2018 (2.0 cases per million population).

Locally, among the 25 measles cases reported to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health from January 2018 to February 2019, five of them were FDH who had travel history to their home country before onset of symptoms. They were either unvaccinated or uncertain about their vaccination history against measles.



When non-immune FDH get infected with measles, they may pass the infection to their friends, relatives, employers and their household members. Infants aged below one year who have not yet received any Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccination are at a particularly high risk of infection if they come into contact with a measles patient. To prevent measles in the community, we would like to enlist your help to inform potential employers of FDH as well as FDH who are prepared to work in Hong Kong of the risk of measles and advise non-immune FDH to get vaccinated, preferably before they arrive in Hong Kong.

In general, people can be considered as non-immune to measles if (i) they did not have the infection confirmed by laboratory test before, and (ii) they had not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines or have unknown vaccination status. All FDH who are non-immune to measles should receive two doses of MMR vaccine. We are aware that some employment agencies may arrange pre-employment medical check-up for FDH. If your agency is also offering this service for FDH, we would be most grateful if you could consider the addition of assessment of the immune status against measles of FDH and MMR vaccination for non-immune FDH in the medical check-up package. MMR vaccines for adults are available in private clinics in Hong Kong.

Please distribute the attached 2-page information sheet on MMR vaccination to all potential employers who patronise your company for their information, e.g. attaching it as a routine information sheet to be included in the information pack prepared by your company for employers. Additionally, pamphlets on measles are also enclosed. You may wish to put it in your office for your customers. If you would like to request more copies, you can complete the online request form at <https://www2.chp.gov.hk/eform/Notice.aspx?LANG=EN>.

Thank you for your assistance. We hope that you will join us as partners to step up our efforts towards protecting people of all ages in the community by promoting immunisation.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. CHUANG Shuk-kwan)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

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

Measles infection is a highly infectious and severe viral infection that may affect any person who is not immune to the infection. 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. **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, preferably before they arrive in Hong Kong. If this is not possible, they can consult a doctor after they have arrived in Hong Kong.** MMR vaccines for adults are available in private clinics 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 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 three months of pregnancy. CRS is characterised by deafness, blindness, heart malformations and mental retardation.

Centre for Health Protection

Department of Health

March 2019