

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (72) in DH SEB CD/8/35/1 Pt.3

March 28, 2019

To 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 three months with 23 563 cases including 338 deaths recorded nationwide in 2019 (as of March 21), according to the information from the health authority of the Philippines. About 60% of the cases had not received measles vaccination. Likewise, according to data from the World Health Organization, as of March 7, 2019, the 12-month measles incidence (number of cases per million population) reached 86.4, 81.0, 47.9 and 16.9 in Malaysia, Thailand, India and Indonesia respectively.

Locally, there is a marked upsurge of measles cases in 2019. As of March 27, a total of 30 cases were reported to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health as compared to nine, four and 15 cases in the whole year of 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively. Among these 30 cases, four of them were foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) working in Hong Kong, with travel history to their home country during the incubation period. All had not received measles vaccination or were uncertain about their vaccination status 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 under the Childhood Immunisation Programme in Hong Kong 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 *before* they arrive in Hong Kong. You are advised to request FDH to produce documented evidence of immunity against measles or proof of receipt of two doses of measles-containing vaccine.

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) had not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines in the past, or have unknown vaccination status or unknown immunity against measles. All FDH who are non-immune to measles should receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine (e.g. 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.

Please routinely distribute the attached 2-page letter together with the 2-page information sheet on MMR vaccination to all potential employers who patronise your company for their information, e.g. putting them into the information pack prepared by your company for employers. The softcopies are available on the following CHP webpage: <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/100569.html>. Additionally, if you would like to request copies of measles pamphlet to put it in your office for your customers, 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 the health of our community against vaccine-preventable diseases.

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 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



衛生防護中心乃衛生署
轄下執行疾病預防
及控制的專業架構
The Centre for Health
Protection is a
professional arm of the
Department of Health for
disease prevention and
control

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

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