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Dear Doctor,

**Vigilance against upsurge of measles**

We would like to alert you of the recent increase in measles activity globally and provide an update on the latest situation in Hong Kong.

Globally, many countries worldwide (including some countries in Europe, Central Asia and Southeast Asia) are facing a resurgence of measles due to a backslide in vaccination coverage rates after the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 58,000 people in Europe and central Asia infected with measles in 2023. A similar upward trend was observed in our neighbouring countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia, where measles remains endemic. According to the World Health Organization, the number of measles cases had risen worldwide with 168 countries reporting over 300,000 cases in 2023, roughly 79% increase from 2022.

As at 28 February 2024, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has already recorded three cases of measles. Two were young children without travel history before symptoms onset while one adult case had travelled to Malaysia during the incubation period. They presented with typical symptoms such as rash, fever, cough and coryza. All of them were born in Hong Kong, two having completed two doses of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine while one case was not yet due for measles vaccination.

Although the vaccination coverage remains very high and the risk of large-scale local outbreak is considered to be low, Hong Kong has been constantly facing the risk of measles virus importation and the potential risk of further spread in the local community. It is possible for some people who are non-immune to get infected and transmit the measles virus to susceptible people as illustrated by the measles outbreak at the Hong Kong International Airport in 2019.



Vaccination is the best protection against measles and it is essential to maintain a high level of immunity in the local population to prevent the spread of measles in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, people are considered as non-immune to

measles if they (i) do not have laboratory evidence of immunity (i.e. no laboratory test ever done or tested negative/indeterminate for measles immunoglobulin G); (ii) do not have laboratory confirmed measles infection in the past; and (iii) have not been vaccinated with two doses of measles-containing vaccine or have unknown vaccination status. All those who are unvaccinated or with unknown vaccination history should receive two doses of MMR vaccine, while those who had already received one dose of measles vaccination in the past should receive a further dose of MMR to complete the course. As measles was endemic in Hong Kong before the introduction of measles vaccine in 1967, people born and lived in Hong Kong before 1967 are considered to have immunity to measles through natural infection.

In view of the recent measles resurgence, we would like to enlist your help to advise non-immune persons to receive MMR vaccine, in particular non-local born individuals (such as foreign workers, new immigrants, overseas students, etc.) who might not have received any measles vaccination in their home country in the past. Please also advise pregnant women and women preparing for pregnancy who are non-immune to measles as well as children aged under one year who are not due for the first dose of MMR vaccine not to travel to places with outbreaks of measles.

In addition, for patients presenting with fever and rash, please consider the possibility of measles. Measles is a statutory notifiable disease in Hong Kong. Suspected or confirmed measles cases should be notified to the Central Notification Office of the CHP via fax (2477 2770), phone (2477 2772) or CENO On-line ([https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS\\_CENO\\_ONLINE/ceno.html](https://cdis.chp.gov.hk/CDIS_CENO_ONLINE/ceno.html)). Please implement appropriate infection control measures at your healthcare facilities to prevent any potential spread from suspected measles cases.

Please draw the attention of the healthcare professionals and supporting staff in your institution/ working with you to the above. Further information on measles is available from the CHP's thematic webpage (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/100419.html>). Thank you for your unfailing support in the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



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