

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (65) in DH CDB/8/35/1 Pt.4

29 April 2025

Dear Medical Superintendent,

Vigilance against upsurge of measles in overseas countries

I would like to draw your attention to the recent outbreaks of measles in some overseas countries, and enlist your support in the prevention of the disease.

As of 18 April 2025, a total of 2,318 measles cases have been confirmed in six countries in the World Health Organization (WHO) Region of the Americas, resembling an 11-fold increase reported in the same period last year. In the United States, as at 24 April 2025, 884 measles cases have been reported by 30 jurisdictions, majority were related to two ongoing outbreaks in Texas (646 cases) and neighbouring New Mexico (66 cases). Three deaths were recorded, all were unvaccinated (two school-aged children and one adult). There is also a multi-jurisdictional outbreak ongoing in Canada, with over 1,000 measles cases reported in Ontario and other provinces. In both countries, the majority of the cases occurred among children who were either unvaccinated or had an unknown vaccination status, particularly in areas where vaccination rates fall short of the 95% threshold required to prevent outbreaks. The WHO considered the overall risk of measles in the Americas Region was high because of ongoing virus circulation from imported cases, suboptimal vaccination coverage and increasing number of susceptible individuals due to continued low vaccine coverage.

In the Western Pacific, measles outbreaks continue to occur in endemic countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia since mid-2024 due to declined measles vaccination rates after the COVID-19 pandemic. In Vietnam, over 80,000 suspected measles cases have been reported so far this year including at least ten related deaths. Japan reported 78 measles cases as of 16 April, exceeded the total of 45 in 2024, half of them were linked to international travel including 30 cases from Vietnam. Measles activity has also accelerated across multiple states in Australia (67 cases as of 29 April 2025 compared to 57 in 2024) including Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia (23, 21 and 17 cases respectively).



Hong Kong was verified as having eliminated measles in 2016. The activity of measles has remained low during the post-elimination years despite an upsurge in 2019. In the context of a global rise in measles after the pandemic, cases resurged locally in 2024 (10 sporadic cases, including four local cases and six imported cases) as compared to the period 2020-2023 (1 to 3 cases per year). As of 28 April 2025, the Centre for

Health Protection (CHP) recorded one case of measles, involving a non-local born 38-year-old man with travel history to Vietnam during the incubation period. No other linked cases have been identified.

Locally, the measles coverage in children has been maintained at a high level of 95% or above, even during the pandemic period. Together with a high overall measles seroprevalence, the risk of local large-scale outbreak is considered to be low. Yet, given the high volume of international travel, Hong Kong is constantly facing the risk of measles virus importation and subsequent spread in the community.

To prevent the spread of measles, we would like to enlist your support to advise non-immune persons to receive measles vaccination, in particular non-local born individuals (such as foreign workers, new immigrants, overseas students, etc.) who might not have completed two doses of measles-containing vaccine 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 measles-containing 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. Any 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). Please implement appropriate infection control measures at your healthcare facilities to prevent any potential spread from suspected measles cases.

I would appreciate if you kindly draw the attention of other 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>). May I take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support in combating infectious diseases and promoting immunisation in Hong Kong.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr AU Ka-Wing, Albert)
for Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health