

# CHP investigates imported measles case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (March 1) is investigating an imported measles case and reminded members of the public to ensure that they have completed two doses of measles vaccination before travelling to reduce the risk of infection.

The case involves a 38-year-old male with good past health. He developed diarrhea and rash since February 22 and February 25 respectively. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital on February 26 and was admitted for treatment and isolation on the same day. His clinical specimen was tested positive for the measles virus upon nucleic acid testing. He is still hospitalised and in stable condition.

Upon notification of the case, the CHP immediately commenced epidemiological investigations. According to the patient, he travelled to Vietnam during the incubation period (February 3 to 8). As he did not have contact with measles patients in Hong Kong, the case has been identified as an imported case. His travel collateral is currently asymptomatic.

He had stayed in Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) during the communicable period. The CHP has maintained a close liaison with the HKSI for follow-up on the contacts of the case. As he also visited the cafeteria of the HKSI from February 22 to 25, the CHP has set up an enquiry hotline (Tel: 2125 2372) for people who visited the cafeteria of the HKSI. The hotline will operate from tomorrow (March 2) to March 7 (from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, and from 9am to 1pm on Sunday).

The investigation is ongoing.

As what the CHP had stated in a recent [press release](#), the number of measles cases in some overseas countries has been on the rise recently. Apart from the United States, measles outbreaks have occurred in neighboring countries, including Vietnam and the Philippines, due to suboptimal overall measles vaccination coverage.

"The incubation period of measles (i.e. the time from infection to onset of illness) is seven to 21 days. Symptoms include fever, skin rash, cough, runny nose and red eyes. When such symptoms appear, people should wear surgical masks, stay home from work or school, avoid crowded places and contact with unvaccinated people, especially those with weak immune system, pregnant women and children under one year old. Those who suspected they are infected should consult their doctors as soon as possible and inform healthcare workers of their history of exposure to measles," the Controller of the CHP, Dr Edwin Tsui, said.

"Under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme, the overall immunisation coverage in Hong Kong has been maintained at a very high level through the immunisation services provided by the DH's Maternal and Child

Health Centres and the School Immunisation Teams. As evidenced by the findings on vaccination coverage of primary school students and the territory-wide immunisation surveys conducted regularly by the DH, the two-dose measles vaccination coverage has remained consistently high, well above 95 per cent, and the local seroprevalence rates of measles virus antibodies reflect that most of the people in Hong Kong are immune to measles. However, Hong Kong, as a city with a high volume of international travel, still faces the potential risk of importation of measles virus and its further spread in the local community. Hence, a small number of people who have not completed measles vaccination (such as non-local born people including new immigrants, foreign domestic helpers, overseas employees and people coming to Hong Kong for further studies) are still at risk of being infected and spreading measles to other people who do not have immunity against measles, such as children under one year old who have not yet received the first dose of measles vaccine," he added.

Dr Tsui also noted that people born before 1967 could be considered to have acquired immunity to measles through natural infection, as measles was endemic in many parts of the world and in Hong Kong at that time. People born in or after 1967 who have not yet completed the two doses of measles vaccination or whose measles vaccination history is unknown, to consult their family doctors as soon as possible to complete the vaccination and ensure adequate protection against measles. For those who plan to travel to measles-endemic areas, they should check their vaccination records and medical history as early as possible. If they have not been diagnosed with measles through laboratory tests and have never received two doses of measles vaccine or are not sure if they have received measles vaccine, they should consult a doctor at least two weeks prior to their trip for vaccination.

Besides being vaccinated against measles, members of the public should take the following measures to prevent infection:

- Maintain good personal and environmental hygiene;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Keep hands clean and wash hands properly;
- Wash hands when they are dirtied by respiratory secretions, such as after sneezing;
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing and dispose of nasal and mouth discharge properly;
- Clean used toys and furniture properly; and
- Persons with measles should be kept out of school till four days from the appearance of a rash to prevent the spread of the infection to non-immune persons in school.

For more information on measles, the public may visit the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). Members of the public who are going to travel can visit the website of the DH's [Travel Health Service](#) for news of measles outbreaks outside Hong Kong.