

CHP investigates local measles infection case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) is today (June 20) investigating a local case of measles infection and reminded the public that vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles.

The case involves a 28-year-old female. She sought treatment from a private doctor on June 11 for fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes. She developed a skin rash on June 13 and attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Kwong Wah Hospital twice, once on the same day and again on the following day. She was admitted for treatment on June 14. Her blood sample tested positive for antibodies of measles virus upon laboratory testing. She remains hospitalised and is in stable condition.

An epidemiological investigation revealed that the patient was uncertain whether she had received a measles vaccination. She had no travel history during the incubation period. Her six household contacts are currently asymptomatic. During the communicable period, the patient had visited the Kowloon City Baptist Church Kindergarten, located at 206 Argyle Street in Kowloon City. The CHP is conducting medical surveillance on approximately 170 staff members and students of the kindergarten concerned.

As measles is highly infectious, the CHP will set up an enquiry hotline (2125 2372) for contact tracing of the case. The CHP appeals to those who visited the Kowloon City Baptist Church Kindergarten between 11.30am and 12.30pm on June 9 or 10 to call the hotline. Officers of the CHP will assess their conditions and offer health advice. The hotline will operate from 9am to 1pm tomorrow (June 21) and June 22, and from 9am to 5pm between June 23 and 27.

The investigations are ongoing.

"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 systems, pregnant women and children under 1 year old. Those who suspect 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 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 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 the measles virus and its further spread in the local community. Hence, a small number of people who have not completed a 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 1 year old who have not yet received the first dose of the measles vaccine," he added.

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, should consult their family doctors as soon as possible to complete the vaccination and ensure adequate protection against measles.

The number of measles cases in some overseas countries remains at a high level this year. The outbreaks in North America (including the United States and Canada), Europe and neighbouring areas (including Vietnam, Cambodia and the Philippines) are ongoing due to the relatively low vaccination rate. Furthermore, an increasing number of measles cases have also been recorded in Japan and Australia this year. 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 a measles vaccine, they should consult a doctor at least two weeks prior to their trip for vaccination.

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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.