

DH announces new measure to improve control and prevention arrangement against measles

The Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan, today (March 28) said that since an outbreak of measles infection emerged at the Hong Kong International Airport last week, the Department of Health (DH) has attached great importance to the infection control measures at the airport, in particular the measles vaccination for people working at the airport who are non-immune to measles. Taking account into the supply of measles vaccines, the DH will conduct a pilot measles serology test for people working at the airport to identify the people most in need of the vaccination.

Dr Chan said, "The overall coverage rate of measles vaccination in Hong Kong has maintained at a high level and the local seroprevalence rates of measles virus antibodies reflect that most of the people in Hong Kong are immune to measles."

"In view of the relatively tight supply of measles vaccines currently, the DH considers that sufficient vaccines should be reserved for people who are most in need. In this regard, the DH will set up a blood test station at the airport starting tomorrow (March 29) and conduct a pilot serology test for people working at the airport on a voluntary basis in order to learn about their antibodies against measles."

A total of 100 samples from airport staff will be obtained in the pilot test and participants will be individually informed of the serology result by phone. Those who are tested positive against measles antibody (IgG) are regarded as immune to measles and there will be no need for further vaccination. The blood test station for the pilot serology test is located at the south side before Immigration Hall at Level 3 of Terminal 2 (non-restricted area). The station will be opened from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm.

Dr Chan said, "Through the pilot test, the DH hopes to better grasp the overall immunity against measles among people working at the airport so that the measles control and prevention strategy can be fine-tuned to improve the current arrangement and assign the vaccines more effectively to those who are non-immune timely."

"After taking reference of the result of the pilot serology test, we will examine if it is necessary to arrange some people to take a blood test at the vaccination station to confirm if they are non-immune to measles and arrange vaccination to them afterwards if necessary."

â€‹ The measles vaccination exercise at the airport aims to protect those working at the airport who are non-immune to measles. The target group refers to people working at the airport who are:

- (1) Non locally-born or born in Hong Kong from 1967 to 1984; and
- (2) Have not received two doses of measles vaccination; and
- (3) Have not been infected with measles before; and in particular
- (4) Those who need to take care of infants under one-year-old or pregnant women

Dr Chan said that there is no urgent need for those who do not belong to the target group to receive measles vaccination as the majority of them should have immunity against measles, so that resources can be reserved for those in most need.

The vaccination stations at the airport will remain open until April 4, including Saturday and Sunday. Due to restriction in the cold chain logistics arrangement for vaccine delivery, the service hours for Saturday and Sunday will be adjusted. Details of the arrangement are as follows:

Venue:	Port Health Office Health Post (South Arrival Apron Passenger Vehicle Lounge, Level 4, Terminal 1)
	Multi-function Room, HKIA Tower (Level 5, Terminal 2)
Hours:	March 30 and 31 9am to 1pm 2pm to 5pm
	April 1 to 4 10am to 1pm 2pm to 5pm 6pm to 9pm

A total of 839 persons received measles vaccination at the vaccination station as at 5pm today, bringing the cumulative number of vaccinations given to 4 212. A hotline (2125 1122) is set up for public enquiries and operates from 9am to 5.45pm daily. As of 5pm today, the hotline had received a total of 1 836 enquiries.

The DH has maintained close liaison with the Airport Authority to conduct relevant health measures during the measles outbreak and disseminate health advice to people working at the airport and travellers.

The DH recommends people working at the airport to measure their body temperature before going to work. If they develop fever or respiratory infection symptoms, they should seek medical advice promptly and not go to work. Those who are non-immune to measles can consider wearing surgical masks when staying indoor. People working at the airport and travellers should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. There should be good ventilation within the airport area.

Meanwhile, the CHP is investigating an additional case of measles infection, which involves a male visitor from the Philippines who came to Hong Kong on March 23. The 17-year-old man with good past health developed

fever and cough on March 24 and rash on March 25. He attended the Out-patient Department of St Teresa's Hospital on March 26 and was referred to Kwong Wah Hospital for admission and treatment on the same day. His respiratory specimen tested positive for measles virus. He is in a stable condition.

Upon notification of the case, the CHP immediately commenced epidemiological investigations and conducted relevant contact tracing. Initial investigations revealed that no contact has shown measles-related symptoms so far. The public places the patient visited during the communicable period are listed in the appendix.

Information on the confirmed measles cases in 2019 with their case summary is uploaded onto the [CHP website](#).

The spokesman explained, "Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus. It can be transmitted by airborne droplets spread or direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected persons, and, less commonly, by articles soiled with nose and throat secretions. A patient can pass the disease to other persons from four days before to four days after the appearance of skin rash."

The spokesman added, "The incubation period of measles ranges from seven days to up to 21 days. Contacts who are not immune to measles may develop relevant symptoms, such as fever, skin rash, cough, runny nose and red eyes, in the incubation period. They should observe if they develop such symptoms in the period. If symptoms arise, they should wear surgical masks, stop going to work or school and avoid going to crowded places. They should avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below one. They should also report their symptoms and prior travel history to healthcare workers so that appropriate infection control measures can be implemented at healthcare facilities to prevent any potential spread.

"Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles. Members of the public who are planning to travel to places with high incidence or outbreaks of measles should review their vaccination history and past medical history, especially people born outside Hong Kong who might not have received measles vaccination during childhood. The history of measles vaccination in Hong Kong is available in the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). Those who have not received two doses of measles-containing vaccines, who do not know their vaccination history or who have unknown immunity against measles are urged to consult their doctor for advice on vaccination at least two weeks before departure," the spokesman said.

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 rash to prevent spread of the infection to non-immune persons in school.

For more information on measles, please visit the CHP's [measles thematic page](#). For news of measles outbreaks outside Hong Kong or the latest travel health advice, please visit the website of DH's [Travel Health Service](#).