

Outbreak of measles infection at airport concluded

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) said today (May 17) that no additional case of measles infection had been recorded as at 4pm today and announced that the outbreak of measles infection at Hong Kong International Airport earlier has concluded.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "A total of 73 cases of measles infection were recorded so far this year, among them 29 cases were associated with the outbreak among airport workers. The incubation period of measles can last up to 21 days. Among the airport-associated cases, the date the patients last visited the airport during the communicable period was April 5. No new associated cases have been recorded in two incubation periods which ended today. We consider that the outbreak of measles infection at the airport has ended."

Regarding measles control measures implemented at the airport, a total of 23 persons had received measles vaccination at the airport vaccination station as at 6pm today, bringing the cumulative number of vaccinations given to 8 501 since March 22. The airport vaccination station will cease operation from tomorrow (May 18).

As for the blood test service, the DH earlier provided the measles serology test service to airport staff. A cumulative total of 777 blood samples have been collected. For the pilot service to provide measles serology testing for Filipino foreign domestic helpers working in Hong Kong, a total of 146 blood samples have been collected to date. Participants are notified individually of the serology results.

The spokesman explained that measles is a generally mild but 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 incubation period of measles ranges from seven days to up to 21 days. Persons who might have had contact with measles patients during the period of communicability 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 place. They should also avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below one. Most importantly, they should seek medical attention as early as possible and reveal relevant contact history of measles to healthcare professionals. If they need to visit any health care facilities during the

period of medical surveillance, they should also report whether they have symptoms and their prior measles exposure history to the healthcare workers so that appropriate infection control measures can be implemented at the healthcare facilities concerned to prevent any potential spread.

Separately, many countries in the world are experiencing a resurgence of measles with outbreaks reported, including countries in Europe and in southeast Asia. Travellers should pay attention to the risk of measles. For outbreak news of the affected areas, please refer to the website of DH's [Travel Health Service](#).

"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, with unknown vaccination history or unknown immunity against measles are urged to consult their doctor for advice on vaccination at least two weeks before departure," the spokesman said.

"Pregnant women and women preparing for pregnancy who are not immune to measles as well as children aged under 1 year who are not due for the first dose of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella combined vaccine under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme are advised not to travel to measles-endemic places or those with outbreaks of measles," the spokesman added.

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](#).