

Update on measles case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (March 15) reported the latest developments in its investigations into a measles case. Those who might have had contact with the patient during the period of communicability are urged to observe if they have developed measles-related symptoms, and to seek medical treatment immediately if such symptoms appear.

The case involves a 23-year-old man with good past health, who developed fever on March 1 and consulted a private doctor on March 3 and March 4. He developed rash on March 4 and sought medical advice on the same day at St Paul's Hospital, where he was admitted for treatment. His blood sample tested positive for immunoglobulin M (IgM) antibodies to measles virus upon laboratory testing. He has been in a stable condition and has already been discharged.

Epidemiological investigations revealed that the patient reported to have received a measles vaccination and did not have contact with measles patients during the incubation period. He travelled to Cebu in the Philippines and Tokyo in Japan during the period of communicability. His home contacts have remained asymptomatic so far and have been put under medical surveillance.

A CHP spokesman said that, upon notification of the case, the CHP immediately commenced epidemiological investigations and conducted relevant contact tracing, including the crew members and passengers of the relevant cabins of four concerned flights, as well as people in the private clinic and private hospital which the patient visited. The places the patient visited during the period of communicability are listed in the appendix.

Initial investigations revealed that no contact has shown measles-related symptoms so far. No high risks contacts such as immunocompromised persons, young children aged below one and pregnant women are identified among the contacts. Epidemiological investigations and contact tracing are ongoing.

The CHP has notified Japan and the Philippines health authorities of the case.

The spokesman explained that 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 reminded the public that the incubation period of measles ranges from 7 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 place. They should also avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below one. Those suspected to have infected are advised to seek medical attention as early as possible and reveal relevant contact history of measles to healthcare professionals.

In Hong Kong, children are given the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine at 1 year old, followed by a second dose at Primary One under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme. The coverage of MMR vaccination in Hong Kong is over 95 per cent at Primary One.

Hong Kong achieved measles elimination in 2016 and the annual reported number of measles cases has remained at a very low level in the past few years. However, measles remains endemic in many places around the world and the incidence levels in these places are much higher than that of Hong Kong.

Recently, the CHP noted that many countries in the world are experiencing a resurgence of measles with outbreaks reported, including countries in Europe and in South East 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 MMR combined vaccine under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme are advised not to travel to places 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, the public may call the 24-hour health education hotline 2833 0111 or visit the CHP's [measles thematic page](#).