



Please address
all correspondence
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Ministry of Health

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30 October 2019

Ministry of Health – Measles Epidemic Update 4

Further to the Ministry of Health Measles Epidemic Update released on the 24 October 2019:

Following is an update of the figures since the Ministry of Health report dated the 24 October:

- As of 27th October 2019 there have been 314 suspected measles cases with 15 confirmed cases. There are 146 laboratory results pending.
- To date, there has been three related mortality; a 14 month-old; a 8 month old and a 37 year old, all are suspected to be measles related, currently awaiting laboratory test;
- Of the 314 cases, mostly are children less than 4 years of age.
- 79% (249) of suspected cases reside in Upolu and 18% (57) in Savaii
- 29% (91) of the 314 suspected cases have been admitted to hospital, 96% were admitted at TTMH with one transferred from Savaii, 4% (4); majority of admissions are less than 5 years old with 3 pregnant mothers (2 at TTM Hospital and 1 at MTII Hospital, Savaii) The Ministry of Health continues to encourage the public to get their measles vaccinations if they have not been vaccinated against measles or have not previously contacted measles.
- The Ministry will advise of the laboratory results are received for the suspected measles related death reported earlier.

The measles vaccination is available at all Health Facilities including:

- The Tupua Tamasese Meaole Hospital (TTMH) on Upolu. The Immunization clinic is located at the TTMH Emergency Department.
- The Malietoa Tanumafili 11 Hospital (MT11H) on Savaii. The Immunization clinic is located at the MT2H emergency department.

Please be advised that it can take up to two weeks for the vaccination to become fully effective so it is important that the usual prevention measures are taken for up to two weeks after you have been vaccinated.

We wish to remind the public that the measles virus is very contagious. The measles virus can be spread by an infected person through the air through breathing, coughing or sneezing. It is important for the public to remain alert for any signs or symptoms of measles.

Initial measles symptoms include: a high fever, cough, runny nose, and, red and watery eyes as well as, eye sensitivity to light.

After 3-5 days a raised red rash will start to appear on the head, face and body. Please note that not all symptoms may be present.

For those who have any of the above symptoms:

1. Isolation at home is strongly recommended.
2. It is important to keep hydrated by drinking lots of fluid.
3. Take panadol or, for children paracetamol syrup, if experiencing a fever and apply cool sponging and it is important to keep hydrated by drinking lots of fluid.
4. Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing or, wear a mask.
5. Keep children at home if they are not well and/or experience any of the above measles symptoms.
6. Stay home and away from public areas or work if you have any of the measles symptoms noted above.
7. Seek medical advice if you or your child's condition becomes worse.

The Ministry of Health continues to advise the public to take preventative measures to protect themselves and their families from contracting measles.

The Ministry advises the public to:

1. Avoid crowded living environments and, to refrain from being in places where there a lot of people or large gatherings.
2. To minimise any spread of germs by covering your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing or, wear a mask.
3. Keep children at home if they are not well.
4. Stay home and away from public areas if you are not well.
5. Ensure that children's vaccination and immunization status is kept up to date.
6. Ensure that children 6 months and above are vaccinated, if they have not been vaccinated.
7. Keep hydrated by drinking lots of fluid.
8. Do not share bedding, clothing or drinks etc.
9. Ensure that you maintain good hand washing practices by washing your hands using soap and clean water several times throughout the day and, after coughing, sneezing or, caring for a sick person.

Some of the people who should not be vaccinated with the current measles vaccine includes; infants less than 6 months of age, pregnant women, people with compromised immune systems and people with a history of allergic reaction to the vaccine.

Prevention measures as mentioned above should be taken to minimise the risk of contracting measles and urgent medical advice be sought for anyone in this vulnerable group suspects that they have measles.

Please advise the immunisation nurse or doctor if you have any of the above conditions or any other Non Communicable Disease (diabetes, high blood pressure etc).

For those travelling to New Zealand which has been experiencing a major measles outbreak or, any country, the Ministry strongly recommends that they check their immunization status. If individuals have not been immunised or are unsure of their

immunisation status we encourage you to look at getting immunized at least 2 weeks before travel.

If anyone has any concerns in this regard please contact one of the Ministry of Health contacts listed below or your healthcare provider.

It is important not to panic but to seek medical advice if you or any member of your family's condition worsens.

For further information on measles, please contact your nearest health facility or, call Dr Robert Thomsen on telephone 66503/7676015 or, Tevaga Dr Ponifasio Ponifaso on telephone 66500 or, Dr Sarah Brown on telephone 66723 or, a healthcare provider.