



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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PROVINCIAL HEADS OF HEALTH

CIRCULAR NO. 1 OF 2022: MEASLES OUTBREAK ALERT

This serves to inform you of the increasing number of positive measles cases in the country and to guide your province on the response to the imminent outbreak. Between January and October 2022, the country saw a significant increase of reported Confirmed Measles Cases (CMCs) as compared to the same reporting period in previous years.

South Africa is committed to measles elimination; thus, a single confirmed case is considered a potential outbreak. As of 16 November 2022, measles outbreaks have been declared in Limpopo with 54 laboratory CMCs since 8 October 2022 and in Mpumalanga with 3 CMCs since 14 November 2022. Four districts in Limpopo (Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune and Waterberg) and one district in Mpumalanga (Ehlanzeni) are currently experiencing outbreaks.

Reflecting on the experience of the 2009/10 Measles Outbreak, during which over 18,000 of measles cases were confirmed; this situation puts the whole country on the verge of a measles outbreak. A suspected measles case is a “person of any age who presents with fever of 38°C with a generalised rash and any one of the following: cough, conjunctivitis or coryza (runny nose).” Such a person should be reported immediately to the Local Authority and/or District Health Office, and a blood specimen should be taken and sent to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) with a case investigation form in order to test for measles antibodies (IgM).

The following measures should be urgently implemented in your province:

- All health professionals and all health facilities should be on high alert to detect and investigate persons who may have measles.
- On admission of a suspected measles case: The Infection Control Nurse (ICN) should be immediately informed. The patient should be isolated, a blood specimen collected, and vitamin A should be given to children between the age of 6 months and 5 years. The vitamin A dose should be repeated after 24 hours if measles is confirmed by the blood specimen.

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- Health professionals should ensure that all children between the age of 6 months and 15 years who are admitted to hospital for any reason are up to date with immunisation; those who are unvaccinated or those with uncertain vaccination status, should receive measles vaccine.
- All confirmed and suspected cases should isolate for five days from onset of the rash. Clinicians should ensure that clients with confirmed measles are given a minimum of 5 days' sick leave from the date of rash onset before they are sent back to school/work.
- Private Service providers should be alerted of the measles outbreak and should implement these measures.
- Ensure that a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) plan is in place, and that advocacy and social mobilisation activities are taking place as planned in order to increase awareness of the measles outbreak, measles cases and the need for measles vaccination.
- Health Promotion, Community Health Workers, Ward Based Outreach Teams (WBOTs) and Community Care Givers (CCGs) should be informed of the imminent measles outbreak and in turn inform communities that people with the above-mentioned symptoms should present to health facilities.
- Provinces should send a weekly summary of suspected and confirmed measles cases, including zero reports, to the national EPI office.
- This circular should urgently be brought to the attention of all Health Workers.

Failure to comply with these measures will have serious consequences for measles control in the country, and may result in undetected outbreaks and loss of lives.

Please bring the contents of this circular to the attention of the: District Managers, Provincial and District MCWH and PHC Managers, Provincial and District EPI Managers, Provincial and District Communicable Disease Control Managers, Hospital Chief Executive Officers and Clinical Managers, Provincial and District Health Promotion and Communication Managers.

Kind regards



DR SSS BUTHELEZI
DIRECTOR-GENERAL: HEALTH

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