



MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES

MEASLES ADVISORY

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services declared an outbreak of measles in Fiji on Thursday 7th of November. There are now 13 confirmed cases of measles in Fiji - 10 from the Namosi/Serua Subdivision (mainly Wailali, Navunikabi and Wainadoi) and 3 from the Suva and Rewa subdivisions.

Measles is a highly infectious viral disease that spreads easily through the air - through breathing, coughing and sneezing. While most people recover well from measles infection, in some cases it can become very serious and even fatal.

Most Fijians are already protected against measles because of our effective immunization program. WHO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services agree that Fiji has a measles vaccine coverage rate of 94 per cent based on the 2018 WHO/UNICEF joint reporting process that takes into account the results of administrative data and periodic vaccination coverage surveys.

You are best protected if you have received two doses of the measles vaccine, or have had measles in the past. Fijians born before the 1980s, when the measles vaccine was first introduced, are generally considered immune as measles used to be a very common childhood illness. However, some people in Fiji may not be fully immunised and are at risk of measles infection.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services is conducting an immunization campaign targeting people who may not be fully immunised and are most at risk of measles infection. Already close to 100,000 people around the country have been vaccinated in phase one of the campaign. This includes over 18,000 people in the outbreak area of Serua/Namosi.

The second phase of this immunization campaign will begin next week.

Across Fiji it will target people in the groups listed below:

- 1) Any child in Fiji who has not received 2 doses of a measles vaccine
- 2) Any child in Fiji aged 12 and 18 months who is due their routine measles immunisation
- 3) Any person in Fiji travelling overseas, however evidence of travel must be provided i.e. travel itinerary or ticket
- 4) All health care workers in Fiji
- 5) All airport and hotel staff

In **Central Division** only, the campaign will also target:

- 1) All children aged 6 months to 5 years
- 2) All people born between 1980 and 2000 (19 to 39 year olds).
- 3) All residents of Serua/Namosi aged 6 months and older.

Central Division is prioritized for this phase of the campaign as all confirmed cases to date are in this division, and the focus remains on containing the current outbreak. The other divisions will be targeted once more vaccine supplies are received. Pregnant women, those with compromised immune systems, and those with a known allergy to the vaccine should not be vaccinated.

Measles is very contagious. To help stop the spread of the disease, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services also advises Fijians to take the following precautions:

- **Avoid non-essential travel to Serua/Namosi.** If you need to travel to Serua/Namosi, please get vaccinated against measles at least two weeks before travel. Please avoid taking those that cannot get vaccinated (e.g. babies under the age of 6 months and pregnant women) to the outbreak area of Serua/Namosi.
- **Avoid holding or attending large gatherings of people**, especially in Central Division, but also those that bring participants from across the country or overseas (such as youth camps, religious gatherings, graduation ceremonies, sporting events, etc). Measles can spread very easily among large groups of people if they are not immune, who can then take the disease back into their communities.
- **If you are holding an event with international visitors, or participants from an outbreak area, please strongly encourage them to get vaccinated against measles at least two (2) weeks before travel.** This especially applies to visitors traveling from other countries with measles outbreaks i.e. New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga.

Please be aware of the symptoms of measles:

Fever and a rash with any of the following: runny nose, sneezing, cough, red/watery eyes, white spots inside the mouth. The rash starts after the other symptoms and spreads all over the body.

If you develop the symptoms listed above please call one of the following numbers. These numbers are only to be used for people who think they, or a family member has the measles. If you need to see a doctor please call the facility before you arrive so they can ensure you do not infect other patients.

Central 2219905
Eastern 2219906
Western 2219907
Northern 2219908

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services urges the public to take heed of our advice to protect yourselves and your families from measles.