



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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MEASLES OUTBREAK

The Provincial Department of Health would like to urge parents, guardians and caregivers to get their children who are 6 months up to 15 years of age for immunisation against measles in areas that are affected by the Outbreak of Measles. This comes after an upsurge in measles cases recently reported in the province.

The province saw a measles outbreak in October this year in the Umzinyathi, uThungulu and Zululand Districts, but the epidemic has since shifted to the Ekombe and Inkandla areas. Response teams have been sent out to Uthungulu, Umkhanyakude, Ugu, Sisonke and Umgungundlovu districts immunising children from 6 months to 15 years of age. Ugu and Sisonke districts have been requested to immunize the entire KZN area bordering with the Eastern Cape to help curb the spread of the epidemic.

Parents should contact their local health department regarding the affected areas and where and when immunisation teams are available. The oldest person infected in this outbreak was 52 years old (from Mooiriver) and the youngest 3 months old (from Umzinyathi). 201 225 children have been immunised in Umzinyathi between 23 October and 10 December 2004.

Private patients are also requested to bring cases of Measles for investigation so that the Department of Health can ensure that immunisation is offered in the affected community.



The total number of cases of confirmed and suspected measles per district from 1 September to 23 December 2004 are as follows:

DISTRICT	CONFIRMED CASES	NEW CONFIRMED CASES (this week)	SUSPECTED CASES
Ugu	1	0	3
Umgungundlovu	5	0	30
Uthukela	2	0	9
Umzinyathi	87	4	181
Amajuba	0	0	9
Zululand	7	0	5
Umkhanyakude	6	0	9
Uthungulu	32	1	49
Ilembe	0	0	1
eThekwini	3	0	7
Sisonke	2	1	1
Area Unknown	1	0	0
TOTAL	146	6	307

All children from 6 months to 15 years of age from the affected areas should be brought for immunisation even if they are up to date with the routine immunisations. The Department would like to reiterate that measles vaccines given during the outbreak response do not replace the routine childhood immunisation schedule. Vaccinations are available for free in all Departmental clinics.

Should parents want their children to have an extra dose of measles vaccine they should consult with the nearest clinic.

Symptoms include an increase in temperature (high fever) and blotchy rash, plus one of the following coughing, runny nose and red watery eyes. All cases should be brought to the attention of the Health Department to ensure that each case is investigated including the taking of specimens and that local immunisation programmes are commenced to given extra doses to protect children.

What is Measles?

Measles is the most dangerous of all childhood diseases. The first sign is a high fever followed by a blotchy red rash all over the body. It is also accompanied by coughing, a runny nose and red eyes. Measles can cause dangerous complications, such as infection of the lungs, blindness and death.

What should be done if measles is suspected?

If any person is suspected of having Measles, he or she should be taken to a nearest clinic or hospital so that blood and urine samples may be collected. Should the results confirm measles, the infected person must be given treatment and isolated.

How to care for a person with measles at home.

- Isolate the person to prevent spread.
- Keep in dark room- away from sunlight.
- Give lots of fluids and small frequent meals of soft foods.

ENDS.

For more information please contact Ms Janet Dalton on 083 457 1168.