



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

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MEASLES AND POLIO "MOP-UP" CAMPAIGN

With Spring looming it is anticipated that there could be an upsurge of measles. Measles is a seasonal disease and the high transmission periods are Spring and Autumn. The National Health Department and the World Health Organisation have been monitoring the situation in KwaZulu-Natal very closely. As a result of this monitoring and a visit to the province, a Measles and Polio "Mop-up" Campaign has been planned.

Measles is a dangerous and highly infectious childhood disease. Young children, who survive Measles are weakened by the disease and may later die from pneumonia, diarrhea, malnutrition or other illnesses. Measles is also an important cause of Mental Retardation and Blindness in children.

KZN is currently experiencing a measles outbreak; to date six persons have died from measles varying from the age of 6 months to 28 years. These deaths occurred in the Umzinyathi, Ilembe and eThekweni Health Districts.

The first positive cases of measles were reported in Zululand (Pongola) in February 2004. People in the Umzinyathi Health District started testing positive for Measles in September 2004 and the situation peaked between October and November 2004. During this period four people died in this District.

An extensive outbreak response was conducted but despite this, pockets of un-immunised persons were found, in the Umzinyathi Health District. The District continued to report cases up to six weeks ago when finally all pockets of un-immunised children were located and immunised. During December 2004, outbreaks occurred in Ugu (South Coast), Uthungulu Upper north Coast), Umkhanyakude (Jozini/ Kosi bay area) and Sisonke (Ixopo/ Kokstad area) Health Districts. Again extensive outbreak responses were conducted in these areas, resulting in effective containment of measles and there have been no further deaths since 26 March 2005.



The eThekweni District has continued to report positive cases, and although the Health Services have done local Outbreak Responses by immunising all children in a surrounding area, sporadic cases are still occurring. This indicates that the disease is still active

The Health Districts to be affected are eThekweni (Durban area), Amajuba District (Newcastle area), Ilembe District (Stanger area) and Uthukela District (Ladysmith & Escort area).

Seven African countries, which have been Polio free for several years, have reported Polio (also a viral disease) in the past few months. These countries include Botswana and Angola. Considering this, the KwaZulu-Natal Health services will be offering Polio (to children under 5years) and Measles immunisations. (children from 6 months to 15 years) during this special "Mop-up" activity. Due to the special nature of the Outbreak and in the interests of Public Health, children will be offered immunisation at schools. Parents will be asked to given written consent.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, urges parents and care givers in the affected Health Districts to present their child/children between the ages of 0 years to 15 years to the nearest clinic or outreach point, for immunisation.

Measles Vaccine (in injection form) will be administered to children from the ages of 6 months to 15 years. Polio vaccine (in the form of oral drops) will be administered to children between the ages of 0 months and 59 months. These are **extra doses**, so the child should still be immunised at the routine immunisation age. Only children immunised in the past 4 weeks against Measles or Polio should be excluded from this supplementary immunisation.

This immunisation could be the difference between life and death for your child.

MOP-UP IMMUNISATIONS WILL TAKE PLACE AS FOLLOWS:

| District | "Mop-up" activities due to commence on: |
|------------------|--|
| Uthukela | 22 August 2005 |
| Amajuba | 15 August 2005 |
| Ilembe | 25 July 2005 |
| eThekweni | 22 august 2005 |

ENDS

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