

## Situation Update: Measles

25<sup>th</sup> June 2026

### Key facts

- Measles is a highly contagious, serious airborne disease caused by a virus that can lead to severe complications and death.
- Measles vaccination averted nearly 59 million deaths globally between 2000 and 2024.
- Measles can affect anyone but is most common in children.
- Measles infects the respiratory tract and then spreads throughout the body. Symptoms include a high fever, cough, runny nose and a rash all over the body.
- Being vaccinated is the best way to prevent getting sick with measles or spreading it to other people. The vaccine is safe and helps your body fight off the virus.

## Measles Response in the Republic of Maldives

According to the latest weekly surveillance update published by the Health Protection Agency, a total of 22 laboratory-confirmed measles cases have been reported in the Maldives since January 2026.

While every confirmed case is taken seriously, the overall number of cases **remains low**, reflecting the Maldives' strong routine immunization programme, high population immunity, and robust public health surveillance system.

As a country that has achieved measles elimination status in 2017, Maldives treats every confirmed measles case as an outbreak. This approach ensures that rapid case investigation, laboratory confirmation, contact tracing, vaccination, and other public health measures are immediately implemented to prevent onward transmission.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Health Protection Agency are leading the national response to confirmed measles cases in the Maldives, with ongoing technical support from the World Health Organization (WHO).

## WHO's support to the national response

### Strengthening Laboratory capacity

WHO is supporting the maintenance of national diagnostic capacity by mobilizing diagnostic supplies, including testing kits, reagents and consumables for specimen collection, for the national reference laboratory at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH). WHO is also facilitating the shipment of selected specimens to the WHO Regional Reference Laboratory in Thailand for molecular testing to help determine the origin of the virus and better understand transmission patterns. In addition, technical guidance is being provided to optimize laboratory testing strategies during periods of increased demand.

### **Vaccines and immunization**

UNICEF has supported in providing additional measles-rubella (MR) vaccines, while WHO is providing technical guidance on vaccination strategies, including targeted supplementary immunization activities for populations at increased risk of exposure.

### **Technical guidance and surveillance**

WHO continues to provide epidemiological and technical support to the Health Protection Agency, Ministry of Health Family and Welfare, in close coordination with technical experts from the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office. This includes support for ongoing risk assessments, interim laboratory testing guidance, surveillance, and evidence-based prevention and control measures.

### **Clinical preparedness**

To strengthen clinical readiness, WHO is supporting a national training-of-trainers programme for healthcare professionals on the clinical management of measles and dengue. Refresher training has already been conducted for clinicians in the Greater Malé Region, with additional sessions planned in collaboration with Health Protection Agency, Ministry of Health Family and Welfare.

### **Public Health Advice**

The public is encouraged to remain informed and continue following guidance issued by the Health Protection Agency.

- **Know the signs and symptoms.** Measles commonly begins with fever, followed by a rash. If you or your child develops these symptoms, seek medical advice promptly and follow HPA guidance on when and how to access care.
- **If you have been tested for measles, stay at home awaiting your results.** Avoid contact with others as much as possible until your diagnosis is confirmed. Refrain from visiting anyone who is unwell during this period.

- **Avoid visiting people with suspected measles.** If someone you know has fever and a rash, avoid visiting them in person until they have been medically assessed and are no longer considered infectious. Measles spread easily through the air, and the virus can remain in the air for up to two hours after an infected person has left an area.
- **Ensure children are vaccinated.** Vaccination remains the most effective way to protect against measles. In Maldives, measles-containing vaccines are provided **free of charge** as part of the national routine immunization programme:
  - **MR vaccine** at **9 months** of age
  - **MMR vaccine** at **18 months** of age

Both doses are required for full protection. Parents and caregivers whose children have missed either dose are encouraged to visit their nearest health facility to complete their child's vaccination as soon as possible.