

Tests. According to Prof Anthony Mbonye, the Ministry of Health acting director general of health services, the airborne disease has already been confirmed in seven people after laboratory tests were done within the month of July, while 67 other cases have been identified.

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KAMPALA. The Health ministry has registered 67 cases of measles in Kampala and Wakiso districts and of these, laboratory tests have confirmed at least seven.

In a statement issued yesterday, the acting director general of health services, Prof Anthony Mbonye, called for calm, but warned citizens against coming into contact with suspected cases.

"Avoid direct contact with children infected or suspected to be infected with the disease, report and immediately take any suspected children to health facilities (and) take unvaccinated children under the age of five for immunisation," Prof Mbonye stated in the statement.

Danger, the statement states, lurks around the five divisions of Kampala together with a majority of Wakiso suburbs.

"All the five divisions of Kampala, as well as several suburbs in Wakiso District are affected," read the statement in part.

Measles, according to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is the most deadly of all vaccine-preventable diseases, accounting for an estimated 777,000 childhood deaths per year worldwide, with over half of these deaths occurring in Africa. Apart from death, children who are affected by measles may suffer from life-long disability including brain damage, blindness and deafness.

Although immunisation is key in helping children attain the highest attainable standard of health, many of the parents especially in the hard-to-reach and poverty-stricken communities don't take their children for vaccination.

Last year, Ministry of Health

Alarm as measles hits Kampala, Wakiso



Vaccination. A nurse administers a measles vaccine injection to a baby at Don Medical Centre in Kitebi, Rubaga Division recently. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

Prof Mbonye stated that the disease "is airborne [and] affects mainly children aged between six months and 10 years of age although it can affect adults. It is spread through air and contact with an infected person."

The statement notes early symptoms to be "high fever, whooping cough and red swelling eyelids, muscle and body aches, irritability, running nose, watery eyes and rashes."

The outbreak of measles comes at a time when the government is pushing forward with mass immunisation campaign against measles and other killer diseases, targeting more than one million children under the age of five, especially in hard-to-reach communities.

Uganda was reported to have effectively suppressed the disease by 2009.

KEY INFORMATION

Outbreak. Last year, Ministry of Health officials confirmed an outbreak of measles in different parts of the country. The government embarked on mass immunisation campaign and contained the outbreak.

Symptoms. Patients suffering from measles present symptoms such as high fever, whooping cough and red swelling eyelids, muscle and body aches, irritability, a running nose, watery eyes and rashes.

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On account of previous

immunisation campaigns, the annual mortality rate per 100,000 people from measles in Uganda has decreased by 88.2 per cent since 1990, an average of 3.8 per cent a year.