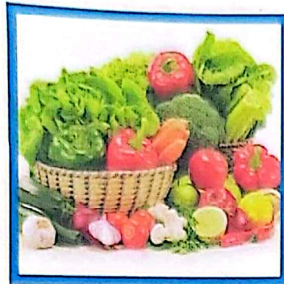


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Patients should be given foods rich in vitamins to boost immunity. Such foods include fresh fruits and green leafy vegetables



2

In some communities it is believed that eating *mukene* (silver fish) mixed with ghee helps to cure measles



3

A person suffering from measles should not take alcohol



MEASLES OUTBREAK: HOW TO FIGHT THE DISEASE

By Lillian N. Magezi

The Ministry of Health recently announced an outbreak of measles in Kampala and Wakiso districts.

Information from the ministry showed that the most affected age group are children under one year.

Prof. Anthony Mbonye, the acting director general of health services, in a press statement described measles as an airborne disease that affects mainly children aged between six months and 10 years, although it can also affect adults.

Measles is a viral disease transmitted by airborne droplets and direct contact with discharges from respiratory mucous membranes of infected persons.

It is highly infectious and can persist in the environment for up to two hours.

According to the health ministry, about 20% of people who suffer from measles develop one or more complications associated with the disease.

Dr Rogers Ntambi a medical officer at Princeton Children's Medical Centre in Kololo says the complications include malnutrition, diarrhoea resulting in dehydration. Those suffering from measles are also prone to infections such as pneumonia, ear infections and ulceration of the cornea (transparent layer at the front of the eye).

The ministry urges those affected to seek treatment, noting that measles is dangerous and can cause death if not properly treated.

Severe complications can be



Rash manifests after early symptoms of fever and irritability

prevented by immunising children against the measles virus.

Caution

Ntambi notes that there is no specific treatment for measles, but most people will recover with bed rest and supportive treatment such as good feeding and drinking a lot of fluids (not alcohol). People suffering from measles should not take alcohol.

Once someone contracts measles, they should take food high in

protein, get vitamin A supplements. They should have co-infections and symptoms such as cough treated.

Importance of proper nutrition

Just like any other illness, measles, especially in children, can result into under nutrition if not well treated, notes Lillian Nakyai Nyanzi, a nutritionist at Neulife Centre in Bweyogerere.

She says measles greatly reduces food intake due to lack of appetite in addition to causing malabsorption of

food, thus weight loss, general body weakness and reduced immunity, which might make it hard for one to fight off infections.

Nyanzi adds that a child with measles should be fed on a "high protein-high energy diet" so as to get the required nutrients and attain their normal body weight and optimal health.

In addition, patients should be given foods rich in vitamins to boost body immunity. Such foods include fresh fruits and green leafy

Symptoms

Prof. Anthony Mbonye, the acting director general of health services, says early symptoms of measles include fever, whooping cough and red swollen eyelids. Others are muscle and body aches; irritability, running nose, watery eyes and rashes. The early symptoms usually last three to four days, although they can take as little as one day or as long as eight days before the rash manifests.

Mbonye adds that one or two days before the rash appears, small red lesions with blue-white centres appear on the inside of the mouth and tongue and occasionally on the white of the eyes.



Doctors say silver fish and ghee are not a cure for measles, but are a source of high protein and energy diet

vegetables.

Myths

In some communities it is believed that consuming *mukene* (silver fish) or *nkeje* (a type of small fish about four times bigger than silver fish) mixed with ghee helps to cure measles. However, Nyanzi explains that although the combination of either type of fish and ghee is not cure for measles per se, it could be one way parents attain a "high-protein- high-energy diet" for their sick children since *mukene* and *nkeje* are highly rich in proteins, while ghee is basically animal fat that is used by the body as energy.

In addition, Nyanzi advises parents to use foodstuffs from all the food groups when planning a meal for their children, regardless of their health status, so as to ensure a balanced diet.