

There has been a significant decrease in immunization coverage in PNG since 2005; and in the last five years, coverage remains at the lowest level. As a result, the country is facing a very high risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, especially measles and polio, which can lead to serious health complications and deaths in children under five years of age.

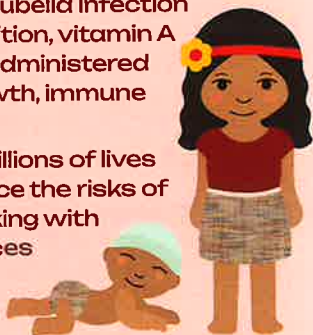


Nationwide vaccination campaign

To immediately build up the immunity of children under five and prevent these deadly and debilitating diseases, Papua New Guinea is planning to conduct a national immunization campaign in all 22 provinces. This will cover children under five years of age against polio, and six months to five years against measles-rubella. Vitamin A supplementation will also be given to all eligible children irrespective of their prior vaccination status.

The nationwide vaccination campaign will be implemented for three weeks to vaccinate all eligible children in Papua New Guinea. The vaccination will be given to prevent the risk of measles and polio outbreak and birth defects due to rubella infection in early pregnancy. In addition, vitamin A supplementation will be administered for eye health, vision, growth, immune function and survival.

Immunization is saving millions of lives every year. Vaccines reduce the risks of getting a disease by working with the body's natural defences to build protection.



Religious and community leaders:

- Become aware of the campaign and motivate your congregations to promote vaccination.
- Educate followers about benefits of measles-rubella and polio vaccines.
- Motivate all parents and caretakers to bring their children to the vaccination sites during the campaign.
- Model appropriate and supportive behaviour, for example, encourage women leaders to take infants or young children for vaccination, and encourage male leaders to support their wives and daughters during the campaign and beyond.
- Remind families—especially husbands—of their responsibility to support the wife/mother during the campaign.
- Support health workers to vaccinate all children under five years of age for polio, and six months to under five years for measles and rubella, and administer vitamin A supplementation.
- Educate parents/caretakers, older siblings of young children, and grandmothers to take their children for vaccination and vitamin A supplementation during the campaign.
- Reassure parents and caregivers that the measles-rubella and oral polio vaccines and vitamin A are **SAFE, EFFECTIVE and FREE**, and are available at health facilities, outreaches, and designated vaccination posts.
- Remind the congregation that prevention is always better than a cure. Advocate to share the message that **when we are protected together, we are healthier and stronger together.**

IMMUNIZATION SAVES LIVES

PROTECTED. HEALTHIER. STRONGER TOGETHER.



#vaccinatetogether
#kisimbanissutwantaim

#NDOH #UNICEF #WHO #GAVI



THE DISEASES

Measles

Measles is a highly infectious disease caused by the measles virus that spreads from person to person through sneezing, coughing, and close personal contact. The disease is more severe in children that are malnourished. The common signs of the disease include high fever, generalized skin rash, red eyes, a cough and a runny nose. Serious complications include an infection of the lung and brain. Pneumonia is the most common cause of death associated with measles. The disease has no specific treatment but can be prevented through immunization.

Rubella

Rubella is caused by the rubella virus that spreads from person to person through the air. Rubella is normally a mild childhood disease, but women who contract rubella early in pregnancy can pass the virus to their foetus and can lead to foetal death and birth defects of the ears, eyes, heart and brain. The World Health Organization recommends that countries use the rubella vaccine in conjunction with the measles vaccine.

Polio

Polio is caused by a virus that enters the body through the mouth from contaminated food or water. Polio is more common in children. Many people who contract polio do not become ill but can spread the infection. The most serious form of polio is paralytic polio, where a child cannot walk or run and may lead to death due to respiratory muscle involvement. Polio is at the cusp of eradication from the world like small pox, and any new case can seriously affect global polio eradication.

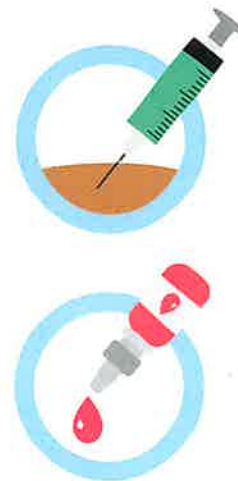
PREVENTION MEASURES

The Measles-Rubella OPV vaccination and vitamin A supplementation will be provided by qualified health workers at health facilities, as well as outreach and mobile sites designated as vaccination posts.

The Measles-Rubella vaccine will be given by injection on the upper right arm of all children aged six months to under five years. Oral polio vaccine and vitamin A supplement will be administered via drops in the mouth.

The campaign is an effective strategy for delivering vaccination to children otherwise missed by routine services (e.g. hard to reach and underserved groups and communities). As such, the campaign is a proven strategy for increasing vaccination equity. The campaign also has the benefit of rapidly increasing population immunity by reducing the number of susceptible children in the population, which can result in protective “herd” immunity.

The campaign provides opportunities for strengthening immunization services through building health system capacity, increasing access to service delivery, advocating for routine immunization, improving immunization practices and providing further public health benefits.



ACTION REQUIRED

National and provincial

- Mobilise resources for the successful planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the campaign at all levels.
- Mobilise and orient other lines and relevant ministries like the Ministry of Education etc. for their full support.
- Mobilise resources for continuous provision of routine immunization, especially for hard-to-reach areas and underserved community groups.
- Mobilise health workers, community mobilisers, doctors, and influencers to support the achievement of the campaign.
- Advocate to share the message that when we are protected together, we are healthier and stronger together.

