

REMARKS
THE MINISTER OF HEALTH
THE HONOURABLE KIM N. WILSON, JP, MP
VACCINATION WEEK 2024
On Monday, 22 April, 2024, 11 am
Outside of the Hamilton Health Clinic

Good morning.

Every year as part of Vaccination Week of the Americas, more than 40 countries and territories in the Americas come together to recognise the significance of immunising and vaccinating their populations.

This week is Vaccination Week with the theme ‘Engage Now to Protect your Future.

During Vaccine Week, we try hard to help those who might not always have consistent access to health services. Our aim, during Vaccination Week, is to encourage more people to get vaccinated so we can reduce diseases that vaccines can prevent from spreading in our community.

We are encouraging parents to vaccinate their infants and children according to the Bermuda Childhood Immunization Schedule

This week, we're going to focus on encouraging everyone to get the MMR and HPV vaccines, making sure people know how important they are.

Everyone aged 9 to 45 can receive protection against HPV-related cancers.

The HPV vaccine can shield against genital warts and several types of cancers, including cervical, penile, anal, throat, head, and neck cancers.

The MMR vaccine is vital for protecting against measles, mumps, and rubella. Measles, being highly contagious, can cause high fever, respiratory problems, and severe complications like pneumonia, meningitis, blindness, and seizures.

The recent resurgence of measles in many parts of the world, including the Americas and Europe, has increased the high risk of measles importation and transmission on our island.

Measles outbreaks have continued to occur globally, with periodic spikes in cases in various regions. Factors contributing to these outbreaks include vaccine hesitancy, suboptimal vaccination coverage, and gaps in immunity.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that as of March 21, 2024, a total of 64 measles cases were reported by 17 States.

The UK also has over 346 cases since October 2023, with 124 positive since January 2024.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that last year, more than 58,000 people in 41 of the 53 Member States in the Region – straddling Europe and Central Asia – were infected with measles, resulting in thousands of hospitalisations, and 10 measles-related deaths.

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can live in the nose and throat mucus of the infected person. It can spread by coughing and sneezing from an infected person. The droplets can last up to two hours in the airspace.

The CDC says that the virus is so contagious that up to 90% of people close to the person who are not immune will also become infected.

Measles is extremely serious, especially in children under the age of five years old. Measles can cause health problems including pneumonia, blindness, and inflammation of the brain.

Before traveling, ensure you and your children's routine vaccinations are up-to-date, including persons attending the ICC Men's T20 World Cup cricket event taking place in host countries the United States and the West Indies in June 2024.

You can receive the MMR vaccine at your doctor's office or the Adult Immunization and Travel Health clinics at the Department of Health's Hamilton Health Centre at 67 Victoria Street, Hamilton.

To strengthen the uptake and increase confidence in vaccines in Bermuda, the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) under the Department of Health will have catch-up clinics at the Victoria Street clinic beginning on Wednesday, May 1st, 2024 from 12 noon to 4 pm.

Before I close, I would like to invite the public to download the HealthyPeople Bda App. It is available for download to your smartphone or tablet from the Apple iStore or Android app store, Google Play. You can find the latest vaccine and child health information; it is a space to collect reliable health information.

I encourage you to download the app and familiarize yourself with this resourceful tool for all community members.

Thank you.