

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

To: Editors & Health Journalists

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### **Department alerts the public of rising rubella cases around the country**

Pretoria: The Department of Health would like to alert members of the public of the rising in laboratory-confirmed cases of rubella around the country.

According to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), a total number of 10137 positive cases of rubella have been identified in the country between Jan and November 2024, which is higher than cases recorded last year. Rubella is highly contagious, but vaccine-preventable disease.

Majority of cases were recorded in Gauteng and the Western Cape provinces, while more than 90% of the total cases are in children under 15 years of age accounting to over 8300 cases, with only one patient over the age of 50 years.

Although rubella in children is a mild, self-limiting illness and complications are rare, but the risk of transmission remain high amongst children especially because many children entered the year 2024 without prior exposure to rubella, or without being vaccinated against rubella. If children are not vaccinated against rubella, and never come into contact with rubella virus through natural infection, children will remain susceptible to rubella.

The disease spreads from person to person through droplets coughed or sneezed into the air by an infected person. Children and pregnant women are at a higher risk of severe health complications of rubella.

Parents and caregivers are urged to closely keep an eye on the health condition of their children and look out for common symptoms which include rash, fever, sore throat, headache, cough, runny nose, swollen lymph nodes in the neck and nausea. Symptoms develop 2 to 3 weeks after exposure.

Rubella infection poses a risk of congenital rubella syndrome amongst pregnant mothers if they are infected in the first trimester of the pregnancy. It can lead to birth defects in their unborn child.

The public healthcare facilities will remain accessible throughout the festive season.

There is no need for public to panic, but members of the public are urged to present themselves or their loved ones with suspected rubella symptoms without delays for early detection, effective treatment and to prevent further transmission.

Breakdown of cases per province is shown below:

Eastern Cape- 1113

Free State- 471

Gauteng- 2603

KwaZulu-Natal- 1996

Mpumalanga - 665

Limpopo - 190

North West - 899

Northern Cape - 862

Western Cape - 1338

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