

REPORT DISEASE AND HEALTH HAZARD NEWS OF INTEREST ALONG THE BORDER

December 21 - 27, 2023

WEEKLY EVENTS

- On December 24, 2023, the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control shared findings of its influenza and respiratory infection surveillance. From weeks 47-50, (November 19 to December 16) respiratory samples were collected from individuals with respiratory symptoms who were receiving treatment at health care facilities within the 14-hospital network. Each week, 120 to 200 samples were collected, and the influenza virus was detected in 42% of the samples. A public health advisory was issued due to the increased risk of influenza outbreaks during the winter season. Individuals at risk, especially those with severe symptoms, young children, school-age children, and the elderly, should seek medical treatment in hospitals. Wearing face masks, especially when in close proximity to high-risk groups, is recommended as a preventive measure against the spread of the disease.
- On December 22, 2023, a report stated that the new JN.1 subvariant of COVID-19 was detected in Thailand and several other countries. On Tuesday, December 19, the World Health Organization declared the JN.1 subvariant as a 'variant of interest' due to its rapid spread, and its structural changes, which has raised concerns among experts. The differences of the viral structure may pose challenges to the immune system, making it more difficult for the body to defend. Despite these challenges, experts emphasize that COVID-19 vaccines remain crucial in preventing severe illness.

NO CURE FOR **POLIO** BUT IT CAN BE PREVENTED THROUGH VACCINATION

The Influenza Education Foundation and the Pediatric Infectious Disease Association of Thailand provided information to the public on the occasion of World Immunization Day 2023, to get vaccinated for polio. Polio, or poliomyelitis, is caused by the poliovirus, which attacks the nervous system, leading to paralysis, difficulty breathing, and potentially fatal consequences. Symptoms vary among infected individuals, with about 95% showing no noticeable signs, 1-2% experiencing mild symptoms resembling a cold, and 1-2% developing severe symptoms, such as intense muscle weakness and irreversible paralysis.

Polio is more prevalent in children, especially those under 5 years old. The virus can spread easily from person to person through contaminated food, water, or direct contact with infected individuals. While Thailand has not reported a polio case for over 14 years, there is ongoing concern due to the resurgence of the disease in neighboring countries and the influx of migrant children and guardians with unknown polio vaccination status. To mitigate the risk, the Ministry of Public Health emphasizes the importance of consistently administering the polio vaccine to children in Thailand as the most effective preventive measure.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

Local public health officers should collaboratively raise awareness among the community about polio by providing information about the causes, symptoms, modes of transmission, and notably, emphasize that polio has no specific treatment; vaccination is the best preventive measure. Therefore, parents should take their children to receive the polio vaccine at nearby public health service centers. Personnel at these centers are available to offer guidance on vaccination according to the criteria set by the Ministry of Public Health, stressing the importance of completing the recommended doses.

Given that the transmission of the disease occurs through the digestive system, general prevention and control is crucial. People should follow proper hygiene practices, such as washing hands before meals, consuming freshly cooked food, drinking clean water, using proper toilet facilities, and washing hands after using the bathroom. These practices contribute significantly to maintaining health and safety, complementing the vaccination efforts outlined by the Ministry of Public Health.

INFORMATION COLLECTED AND ANALYZED BY

Multisectoral Capacity Development Program for Public Health Emergency Detection and Response in Border Areas

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Supported by the Thailand MOPH - US CDC Collaboration on Public Health

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