

RISING CASES OF PNEUMONIA IN MAINLAND-CHINA

ADVISORY TO MEMBER STATES

On November 13, 2023, China's National Health Commission reported a significant increase in respiratory diseases throughout the country. These diseases, which primarily affect children, are caused by various factors, including influenza, *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The increase in cases was attributed to two main reasons:

- Firstly, the lifting of COVID-19 social measures such as wearing masks, social distancing, handwashing, and restricted movements which allowed individuals with compromised immune systems or those without necessary vaccinations/boosters to interact freely.
- And secondly, seasonal fluctuations, including the cold winter, which is expected to cluster people in enclosed areas and close proximity to each other.

Spread and Symptoms: Several countries, including China, India, Netherlands, Taiwan, and Vietnam, have reported positive cases of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, a type of pneumonia also known as walking pneumonia. The symptoms of this disease include a sore throat, fatigue, and a lingering cough that can persist for weeks or months.

Containment and Measures: The Chinese authorities have implemented enhanced outpatient and inpatient surveillance measures for respiratory illnesses, including *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, after their announcement on November 13th, 2023. These measures complement the existing respiratory surveillance mechanisms and have led to an increase in the detection and reporting of respiratory illnesses in children.

The authorities have also stated that no unusual or novel pathogens or clinical presentations have been detected in Beijing and Liaoning, and that the observed increase in respiratory illnesses is due to multiple known pathogens. The Africa CDC recommends adopting the simple yet effective methods learned during the COVID-19 outbreak and management. These included the following:

- It is important to ensure that children receive all the recommended vaccines, including those for influenza, COVID-19, and other respiratory diseases. This may include booster shots as necessary.
- Keep a safe distance from individuals who are unwell or suspected to be sick. This is particularly important for those who frequently travel internationally.
- If you feel unwell or have recently travelled, it is best to stay home and avoid contact with others.
- If you are unsure about your health status, it is recommended that you get tested and seek advice from a qualified healthcare professional.
- Wear face masks when appropriate and frequently wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser.
- Good ventilation is also important, and lessons learned from controlling tuberculosis can be applied to this situation.
- Finally, it is important to practice good hygiene habits such as regular handwashing, using sanitiser when clean water is not available, and avoiding sharing items that come into contact with the face or mouth.

Advisory

Africa CDC has not received any reports of influenza, RSV or SARS-CoV-2 cases from any Member State as of the end of November 2023. Africa CDC is advising Member States to **increase surveillance of respiratory infections, including Influenza-like Illnesses (ILI), Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI), and SARS-COV-2.** This will help to detect and report any unusual trends or patterns.

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