

PRESS RELEASE

The Minister of Public Health, **Dr MANAOUDA Malachie**, informs the general public that two (02) suspected cases of diphtheria were notified in the Centre and South regions, respectively on November 7 and December 7, 2023. These notifications are done at a time when neighbouring Nigeria is affected by a diphtheria epidemic with 557 confirmed cases and 73 deaths already recorded.

Diphtheria is a highly contagious childhood disease, which is transmitted through the air during inhalation of respiratory droplets or by contact with objects soiled by secretions of infected people. Its symptoms are sore throat, hoarse voice, swelling of the neck, fatigue, fever and breathing difficulties which can lead to death.

Diphtheria is preventable by vaccination, and is one of the diseases taken into account in routine vaccination under the Expanded Programme on Immunization.

Upon notification of the first case which constitutes a major public health risk, the Ministry of Public Health initiated the following measures:

- Strengthening epidemiological surveillance across the entire country;
- Conducting multi-sector investigations and active research of cases and contact persons;
- Carrying out awareness raising and community mobilization activities.

Furthermore, health personnel are invited to immediately notify and isolate any suspected case without moving them. It is important to comply with infection prevention and control rules.

Considering the fact that diphtheria is transmitted through the respiratory route, the following barrier methods are recommended:

- **Regular washing of hands with clean, running water and soap;**
- **Wearing a mask before any contact with sick people and their body fluids.**

Diphtheria vaccination, which is strongly recommended, remains the best prevention means against this disease. This is done through routine vaccination for children and booster vaccinations for adults.

For additional information or any suspected cases, call the toll-free number **1510**.

