

# MEASLES AND REHABILITATION FACT SHEET

Did you know rehabilitation professionals play a critical role in the clinical management of measles?

## WHAT IS MEASLES?

Measles is a **highly contagious airborne disease** caused by a virus that can lead to severe complications and death.



## WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?

Measles cases are rising around the world. Even though a safe and cost-effective vaccine is available, in 2021, there were an estimated 128,000 measles deaths globally, mostly among unvaccinated or under vaccinated children under the age of 5 years. In 2023, there was a 30-fold increase in measles cases in Europe, necessitating 21,000 hospitalizations. Many countries around the world are at risk of outbreaks.

## WHAT ARE THE REHABILITATION NEEDS DUE TO MEASLES?

Rehabilitation interventions can help to prevent acute deterioration, support recovery and reduce long term functional impairments following measles infection. Common complications of measles requiring rehabilitation input include:

- Pneumonia
- Dysphagia due to severe mouth sores
- Critical illness
- Post Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS)
- Encephalitis (affecting 1-3 of every 1000 children).



Credit: WHO/ Zakarya Safari

## WHAT ACTION IS NEEDED?

In areas where vaccination rates are low or declining, local and national outbreaks are increasingly likely; such outbreaks can quickly overwhelm local health services. Those planning for potential surges in cases must be aware of the essential role rehabilitation professionals play in the clinical management of the critically unwell, particularly paediatric patients, and should include rehabilitation professionals in any preparedness, readiness and response.

Measles vaccination averted 56 million deaths being between 2000 and 2021. While rehabilitation professionals working in critical care should be prepared to manage the consequences of measles, increasing vaccination rates can easily avert future outbreaks.



Credit: UK-Med

For more information on the World Rehabilitation Alliance **Emergencies Workstream**, please visit :

