Seasonal influenza

Influenza or “the flu” may occur throughout the year in tropical areas including Myanmar. July to September is the usual influenza season for Myanmar. The following personal protective measures are keys in flu prevention:

- Cover your nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing into elbow or arm. Or, use a tissue to fully cover mouth and nose, then discard used tissue well. Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly and frequently.
- Eat nutritious food and drink plenty of water
- **Frequently** wash your hands with soap and water
- Get plenty of rest and mild exercise
- Seek advice from health professionals if you have symptoms of flu.

Influenza vaccination is also an effective way to prevent disease. WHO recommends annual vaccination for high-risk groups (pregnant women, children under 5 years, the elderly, individuals with chronic medical diseases, individuals with immunosuppressive conditions) and health care workers.

For flu season preparedness, WHO Myanmar in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) and partners held a coordination meeting on 24 February 2018. Furthermore, WHO mobilized and handed over seasonal influenza vaccines 7,100 vials to national health authorities for high-risk health care workers on 22 June 2018 -- a key lesson from last year.

Humanitarian assistance in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States

Myanmar continues to face significant humanitarian challenges related to crisis in Rakhine State, armed conflicts in Kachin and northern Shan States and vulnerability to natural disasters. Ensuring effective humanitarian response in these areas remains a priority for WHO. WHO supports mobile medical teams of MoHS in Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathedaung and Sittwe townships of Rakhine State -- to provide life-saving health care to conflict affected people. Basic essential medicines were given to MoHS and local health organizations in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan States. Emergency health kits are prepositioned in Myitkyina, Sittwe and Yangon to ensure effective humanitarian response. Health cluster coordination meetings are held regularly at Sittwe, Myitkyina, Yangon and Naypyidaw with the active participation of MoHS and partner organizations.

Furthermore, WHO and partners mobilized resources to address humanitarian needs in emergency and natural disasters.
Progress in HIV/AIDS

Myanmar is one of 35 fast track priority countries that account for 90% of new HIV infections globally. In 2017 at country level, 224,026 people are reported living with HIV, representing 0.57% prevalence.

Given the nature of modes of transmission across the country, HIV prevalence and affected populations are different among states and regions. Hence, National Strategic Plan on HIV and AIDS 2016-2020 recommended developing and implementing operational plans at state and regional level tailored to local needs.

Therefore, a main focus is to plan and respond especially in 5 regions and states, where an estimated 75% of new HIV infections occur. These are Kachin, Yangon, Mandalay, Sagaing, and Shan North. Ministry of Health and Sports initiated development of a state level plan at Kachin State, which has one of the highest HIV prevalence. This includes advocacy, stakeholder consultation, data review workshops, priority setting workshop, and work plan development meetings.

Advocacy and engagement of key stakeholders took place on 22 May 2018 in Myitkyina as a kick off activity. Subsequently, situation analysis workshop was conducted on 11-14 June 2018 with participation of local stakeholders - related ministries such as social welfare and education, implementing partners, community groups and key population representatives. HIV interventions will be designed and developed by local people according to the local context and needs. A prioritization of intervention workshop takes place in July 2018.

Hepatitis in Myanmar

Among South-East Asia Region countries, Myanmar is the first country to provide hepatitis C treatment free of charge in the public sector. Three years after the National Hepatitis Control Programme was established, the hepatitis C treatment was started in seven public hospitals since 2017. To date, 2,089 patients were reported successfully treated by the programme. A recent review meeting, organized after one year of implementation, helps improve the programme’s effectiveness and to guide future direction.

In collaboration with the national Hepatitis control programme, Ministry of Health & Sports, WHO and partners developed operational plan for hepatitis. A key planned activity is to develop a video clip for awareness and advocacy on viral hepatitis B and C in preparation for World Hepatitis Day (28 July). Myanmar Liver Foundation and WHO joined hand in hand to support this initiative. Double Academy Winner, Actor and Director U Lu Min, also a member of the board of directors of Myanmar Liver Foundation, has agreed to script and direct production of a short video clip for television. This would be ready for World Hepatitis Day, as well as beyond, for use in the public sector as required.
Signing of the Ministerial Call for Action to eliminate malaria

Multidrug resistant malaria has been detected in Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) countries over the last decade. This may spread to other parts of the world unless contained swiftly and effectively. High level political leaders of GMS countries felt the need to address this resistance threat jointly. In light of this, Health Ministers from GMS countries – Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam - together with WHO Regional Directors from South East Asia and Western Pacific Regions, and partners, passed a ‘Ministerial Call for Action to eliminate malaria in GMS by 2030’. It was signed at the 71st World Health Assembly at Geneva on 22 May 2018. The ‘Call for Action’ places particular focus to address multidrug resistant malaria in the subregion. Greater Mekong Subregion countries stand “Ready to Beat Malaria” together with WHO and a range of stakeholders.

Watch for Dengue - the season has started

Dengue is one of the most common mosquito-borne viral infections which can be life-threatening. The dengue season just started in Myanmar. Hence, the time for advocacy and preparedness is perfect. The national Vector borne disease control programme organized advocacy meetings in states and regions, with support of WHO, during May and June 2018. Social Ministers of affected states and regions, senior officials from Ministry of Health & Sports, WHO staff, and partner organizations actively participated in these meetings.

During the recent dengue advocacy workshops in Ayeyarwaddy, Bago and Yangon Regions, WHO gave key following public health messages to help prevent dengue:

- seek advice of a health professional for early diagnosis;
- cover, empty and clean of domestic water storage containers on a weekly basis;
- environmental sanitation with proper waste disposal especially solid waste;
- remove artificial man-made mosquito breeding sites (vehicle tyres, cans, plastic bags);
- drain water collection points around the house; and
- raise community awareness for mosquito control.
Technical strategic group meeting on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health

In alignment with the National Health Plan and Global Strategies, Ministry of Health and Sports, WHO and United Nations agencies agreed to adopt an integrated life cycle approach for continuity and better health care of adolescents, women and newborn and children. Thus, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Technical Strategic Group (TSG) was established on 17 May 2018, with participation of MoHS, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, 3MDG-UNOPS and other key partners. WHO shared technical updates on quality improvement initiatives of maternal, newborn and child health in Myanmar and proposed key steps forward. Furthermore, members of the TSG agreed to develop "one comprehensive National RMNCAH Strategy" to improve maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in Myanmar.

Improving food safety

Access to safe and nutritious food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health. Unsafe food containing harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemical substances, causes more than 200 diseases – ranging from diarrhoea to cancers.

WHO has been providing continuing technical support to the Ministry of Health & Sports in strengthening of national Codex capacity -- a critical strategy to promote food safety. The implementation of Codex standards promotes international trade and facilitates fair practices in food trade.

For all of us, the five key messages to Safer Food are:
1) keep clean
2) separate raw and cooked
3) cook thoroughly
4) keep food at safe temperatures
5) use safe water and raw materials.

![Credit: MRH Division](image)

Home visit to pregnant mother by basic health staff

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<td></td>
<td>71st WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia</td>
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<td>World Antibiotic Awareness Week</td>
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