

## **Eight die of measles in Ukraine this year as outbreak worsens**

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An electron micrograph of the measles virus. Credit: CDC/ Courtesy of Cynthia S. Goldsmith

Eight people have died of measles in Ukraine since the start of the year, already half as many as died in the whole of 2018, authorities said on Wednesday.

The Health Ministry said in a statement that two deaths from the extremely contagious viral disease have been recorded since Saturday. Last week alone, more than 3,100 people went down with measles, half of them children.

The World Health Organization's data show that Ukraine logged 53,000 confirmed measles cases last year, accounting for more than half of all cases in Europe.

Skyrocketing measles rates in Ukraine are believed to be due to vaccine refusal as well as a temporary breakdown in vaccine orders by the government a few years ago.

Ukraine's efforts to battle the outbreak are also hampered by political infighting less than two months before the presidential election.

Health Minister Ulana Suprun was stripped of her ministerial powers earlier this month after a lawmaker filed a lawsuit against her in what was seen as a political vendetta.

Suprun, who was in charge of profound reforms of the crumbling Ukrainian health sector, remains acting minister while the court hears her appeal but her powers are significantly limited. She told reporters

earlier on Wednesday that the government has recently purchased measles vaccines for the military but that she is unable to sign the documents to send them to military bases.

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