

Samoa's measles death toll rises to 20

November 22 2019

The death toll from a measles epidemic in Samoa has risen to 20 as the outbreak rages out of control, with hundreds of new cases emerging daily, official data released Friday showed.

The government said there were 1,644 cases, with 202 diagnosed since Thursday, most affecting young [children](#).

It said the number of deaths had hit 20, including 19 children aged under four years old.

An additional 11 children are critically ill in hospital.

Samoa has declared a [state of emergency](#) as it tries to contain the outbreak, launching a compulsory vaccination programme, closing schools and banning children from public gatherings.

Australia and New Zealand have sent medical specialists and supplies, while the UN children's agency UNICEF is distributing more than 110,000 doses of measles [vaccine](#) to Samoa's population of about 200,000.

Tonga and Fiji have also experienced outbreaks, although much less severe and without any deaths so far due to higher vaccination rates among the population.

UNICEF estimates Samoa's vaccination rate is 28-40 percent, while in Tonga and Fiji they are 99 percent and 81 percent respectively.

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