

World Health Body Records More Than 3,000 Measles Cases in Russia

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The World Health Organization in Europe called on Wednesday for measles vaccination campaigns to be stepped up across the region after recording 22,000 cases of the highly infectious disease since the start of 2014.

Saying she was "taken aback" by high case numbers, Zsuzsanna Jakab, the UN health agency's European director, said the 22,149 reported cases from seven countries threatened the region's goal of eliminating measles by the end of 2015.

Even though measles cases fell by 50 percent from 2013 to 2014, large outbreaks continue in both eastern and western Europe, the WHO said.

Italy has seen 1,674 measles cases since the beginning of last year, while Germany has had

583, Kyrgyzstan 7,477 and Russia more than 3,240.

Measles is a contagious and sometimes deadly viral disease which can spread very swiftly among unvaccinated children.

There is no specific treatment and most people recover within a few weeks, but, particularly in poor and malnourished children and people with reduced immunity, measles can cause serious complications including blindness, encephalitis, severe diarrhea, ear infection and pneumonia.

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