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## Cuba highlights importance of child immunization

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The Cuban Minister of Public Health, Jose Angel Portal, reminded today in a message on the social network Twitter that Cuban children are protected by '11 vaccines, of which eight are of national production.'

Portal recalled in his tweet that on February 12, 1804, doctor Tomas Romay Chacon injected his two children against smallpox and began vaccination on the Caribbean island, a process by which infants are immunized against 13 diseases. In Cuba, the National Immunization Program (PIN) is accessible to the entire population, free of charge, guaranteed in the first level of vaccination and complemented by school vaccination.

As a result, Cuba has eliminated six immune-preventable diseases: polio (1962), diphtheria (1979), measles (1993), rubella (1995), mumps (1995) and whooping cough (1997).

Other conditions have been controlled at rates below 0.1 per million population, such as tetanus, haemophilus influenza type b, meningococcal meningitis, hepatitis b and typhoid.

Tomas Romay's decision not only promoted smallpox vaccine in the country, but it was also a first step that later, in 1962, after the polio campaign, made it possible to set up the vaccination program, one of the pillars of the Cuban health system.