



WARRINGTON

Borough Council

Professor Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

David Herne
Director of Public Health, Interim

East annexe
Town Hall
Sankey Street
Warrington WA1 1UH

20 February 2024

Dear Parents/Guardians/Carers,

Re: Measles and Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine

I am writing to you regarding measles, and the MMR vaccine. There has been a recent increase in measles cases in England, most of the outbreaks have been in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. Most of the cases have been in children under the age of 10 years, with many outbreaks linked to nurseries and schools. Over half of these cases have ended up in hospital. Most of these cases were unvaccinated, and some had only had 1 dose.

Over the past month, we have started to see cases in the North West: mostly in the Greater Manchester area, but also in and around Liverpool. We now have cases in Warrington.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) are asking people to be alert to the signs and symptoms of measles, and ensure that they and their children have received two doses of the MMR vaccine.

Measles can be a very unpleasant illness. In some children it can be very serious and lead to hospitalisation, and in rare cases, tragically cause death. People in certain risk groups including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems, are at an increased risk of serious complications, for example, miscarriage in pregnant women.

The free MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella. Having two doses of the MMR vaccine at the right time (dose 1 from 12 months, and dose 2 from 3 years 4 months) is the best way to protect your child and help prevent it spreading, especially to those most vulnerable.

Please make sure your child/children are up to date with their 2 MMR doses. To see if your child is up to date with their MMR vaccines, you can check your child's personal child health record (PCHR), known as the 'Red Book', or contact your GP practice.

If your child is aged 1 – 5 years, and hasn't had their 2 MMR doses, your GP practice will be inviting them for their vaccine over the next couple of weeks. If you don't receive this invite, please contact your GP practice and arrange to make the appointment.

I would also advise all parents/guardians/carers to check their own MMR status, and ensure they have had both doses. For women who are planning to get pregnant in the near future, please speak to your GP to ensure you have your MMR doses before you conceive.

Measles symptoms to be aware of include:

- high fever
- sore, red, watery eyes
- coughing
- small greyish-white spots in the mouth
- aching and feeling generally unwell
- a blotchy red brown rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms.

Anyone with symptoms is advised to stay at home and phone their GP or NHS 111 for advice, rather than visiting the surgery or A&E, to prevent the illness spreading further.

Measles is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There are things you can do to reduce the risk of spreading or catching it:

Do:

- wash your hands often with soap and warm water
- use tissues when coughing or sneezing
- throw used tissues in the bin
- take up the offer of MMR vaccine.

For further information about:

- **Measles**, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>
- the **MMR vaccine**, please visit: <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/01/what-do-i-need-to-know-about-the-mmr-vaccine/>
- the **UK childhood vaccination schedule**, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>

Yours faithfully,



David Herne
Director of Public Health, Interim



UK Health
Security
Agency

NHS

think
measles

It's not just a kids'
problem



immunisation

Helping to protect everyone, at every age

This leaflet explains about the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination which helps protect against the 3 diseases.

People who have not been vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR vaccine are more likely to catch these diseases. Children do become ill when they catch them, but so do adults. All 3 diseases can be very serious. They can make adults very ill and cause problems for women who are pregnant and people who have weakened immune systems (and can't fight infection well).

Measles is a serious illness that is highly infectious. To be protected from measles and other infections including mumps and rubella, you need to be immunised with 2 doses of MMR vaccine.

What is measles?

Measles is caused by a very infectious virus causing a rash and high fever and can be very serious. The illness can be more severe in adults and can last for longer. Someone with measles usually has to spend about 5 days in bed and may be off school or work for 10 days. Adults are also at higher risk of complications.



Complications of measles can include ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea, encephalitis (infection of the brain), and brain damage. About one in 5,000 individuals with measles is likely to die. There have been 3 deaths from measles in England since 2006.

Measles is highly infectious – a cough or a sneeze can spread the measles virus over a wide area. If you come into contact with it and are not protected, the chances are that you will be infected.

If you think you have measles, call your GP or walk in centre before you visit. This is important - if you spend time with someone who has a weak immune system they can easily catch it and become seriously ill. So if you have symptoms of measles, call ahead and get advice.

What is mumps?

Mumps can cause viral meningitis, a very unpleasant condition. Painful complications of mumps can include inflammation of the ovaries or testicles, and in rarer cases, the pancreas.

- if you have missed your MMR there's a good chance that you may catch mumps if you come into contact with someone with the disease. You need 2 doses of MMR to be fully immunised
- the only effective way to prevent mumps is to have 2 MMR vaccinations

What is rubella?

Rubella (german measles) is a viral infection that's now rare in the UK. It's usually a mild condition that gets better without treatment in 7 to 10 days. Rubella is more serious for pregnant women.

Symptoms of rubella include:

- a red-pink skin rash made up of small spots
- swollen glands around the head and neck
- a high temperature (fever)
- cold-like symptoms such as a cough and runny nose
- aching and painful joints – more common in adults

The symptoms of rubella usually only last a few days, but your glands may be swollen for several weeks.

For more information visit www.nhs.uk/measles or you can phone NHS on 111.

You are at greatest risk if you have not been immunised with 2 doses of MMR vaccine.

If you can't remember if you've had both MMR vaccinations, it's better to book an appointment to have MMR vaccine because extra doses pose no health risk. If you need 2 doses, they should ideally be given 3 months apart.

If you have missed one or both of your MMR vaccinations contact your GP surgery to arrange an appointment.

By getting immunised you will not only be protecting yourself but also those people, especially children, who cannot have MMR because they have illnesses such as leukaemia. They are protected if enough of the population is vaccinated so measles is eliminated.

Are there any side effects?

Some people develop mild side effects such as a sore arm or mild rash or swollen glands after vaccination. More serious side effects are rare but occasionally a rash may develop up to 6 weeks after vaccination. If you are worried speak to your practice nurse or GP.

If you are having treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer, or you have a condition that affects your immune system such as HIV get advice from your nurse or doctor.

In the UK we have 2 MMR vaccines

Both of the vaccines work very well, one contains porcine gelatine and the other doesn't. If you want to have or you want your child to have the porcine gelatine free vaccine, talk to your practice nurse or GP.

Remember, measles – it's not just a kids problem

If you care for individuals with a weakened immune system or young children as part of your work, it's particularly important that you are fully immunised with MMR. Passing on measles to children who are too young to have MMR vaccine or to someone who is already ill, can have very serious consequences for their health. As a precaution, women should avoid getting pregnant for one month after MMR vaccination.

It's never too late to have your MMR vaccination

UK Health Security Agency **NHS**

If you think you've got
measles
call ahead

Have you got a rash and do you feel very unwell – don't go to the surgery, walk in centre or your local accident and emergency department – **Call ahead**, that way if you do have measles – you won't pass it on to others – it can be a fatal disease if someone has a weak immune system and can't fight it off – if a pregnant woman catches measles – it can harm her baby.

Measles is serious, call ahead and get advice.

Measles
it's not just a kids' problem.

i mmunisation
Helping to protect everyone, at every age

UK Health Security Agency **NHS**

think
measles
It's not just a kids' problem

Teenagers, young adults and anyone who has missed their MMR vaccination can get measles. Symptoms such as:

- high fever
- rash – sometimes starting around the ears
- sore red eyes
- cough
- aching and feeling unwell

Remember, if it could be measles – they need to be in an area where they cannot pass the infection to vulnerable patients such as the immunocompromised and pregnant women.

For more information go to
www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

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To order more copies of this booklet, visit:

www.healthpublications.gov.uk or phone: 0300 123 1002,
Minicom: 0300 123 1003 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)

www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

MEASLES

Don't let your child catch it

– get them vaccinated with the MMR vaccine

- measles outbreaks happen when not enough children have been vaccinated
- measles can be a very serious disease, leading to ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea, and damage to the brain. Measles can kill
- your child is at risk of measles if he or she hasn't had the MMR vaccination
- 2 doses of MMR vaccine are needed to get the best protection
- if your child is due to have had 2 doses of MMR but has not yet received them, no matter what age they are, you should contact your GP to get them vaccinated as soon as possible*
- if you can't remember if your child has had any, 1 or 2 doses of MMR vaccine, check his or her personal child health record (the Red Book). If this doesn't help, speak to your GP
- if you don't know how many doses your child has had, it's better to have 2 doses of MMR vaccine now rather than risk leaving them unprotected

*In response to a local outbreak then the 2 doses can be given one month apart from the age of 18 months.



Answers to some common questions about measles and the MMR vaccine

Why are we seeing these outbreaks of measles?

Measles is a highly infectious disease, spreading quickly from person to person, especially in schools. A child with measles will infect almost all unprotected children they have contact with. Since the end of 2017 there has been an increase in measles globally which has affected the UK. This has resulted in some spread into wider communities, in particular in undervaccinated groups.

When are the MMR vaccinations usually given?

The best times are between 12 and 13 months of age and again at 3 years and 4 months, with one dose on each occasion. But, if your child wasn't vaccinated then, they can be vaccinated at any age with 2 doses one month apart.

Will there be any side effects to the vaccination?

Your child may get the symptoms of measles, mumps and rubella for up to 6 weeks after the vaccination but in a very much milder form. This proves that the vaccine is working and your child is building up resistance to future contact with the viruses that cause the 3 diseases. Not all children show these symptoms but that doesn't mean the vaccine isn't working.

Should parents in outbreak areas get vaccinated against measles?

As with many diseases, once you have had measles, you don't catch it again because you have built up a natural resistance to it. So, if you've had measles or 2 doses of MMR vaccine you do not need to get vaccinated now.

For more information about measles and MMR go to
www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/