

20 Dec 2017

Measles reminder

Ensure all travellers are up to date with measles vaccination

All travellers should ensure they are fully protected against measles, either through past infection or with two doses of a measles containing vaccine. Measles is still endemic in many countries around the world and there are currently large measles outbreaks in Europe, with Romania, Italy and Germany being the worst affected countries.

The UK recently achieved WHO measles elimination status, but this does not mean that measles has disappeared. We continue to see imported measles cases in the UK and limited onward spread can occur in communities with low vaccine coverage and in age groups with very close mixing. For example, recent importations from Romania have led to outbreaks in Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester. In 2016 there were over 500 measles cases in England, many in teenagers and young people attending summer festivals.

As history teaches us, elimination can only be sustained by maintaining and improving coverage of the MMR vaccine in children and by using all opportunities to catch up older children and adults who missed out on the vaccine.

Advice for travellers

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes leads to serious complications.

The MMR vaccine is available to all adults and children who are not up to date with their two doses. Anyone who is not sure if they are protected should check with their GP practice.

Recent measles outbreaks in Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and Surrey are all linked to the ongoing large outbreaks in Europe. Before you travel you should make sure you are up-to-date with all currently recommended UK vaccines.

In the UK, MMR is usually given to infants at around 12 months of age with a second dose given before school, to ensure best protection. In some cases, MMR can be offered to babies from 6 months of age (e.g. for travel to countries where measles is common, or during an outbreak situation). Ask your health professional for advice on the best option for your children before you travel.

Two doses of MMR in a lifetime are needed for a person to be considered fully protected [3].

It is never too late to have the vaccine.

Advice for health professionals

Guidance on measles vaccination is available in [Immunisation against infectious disease Chapter](#)

[21](#). Advice on immunisation against measles is also available for those whose [immunisation status is uncertain](#). In the UK, measles is a [notifiable disease](#). Any case of suspected measles should be notified to the [local Health Protection Team](#).

Resources

- [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Surveillance and disease data for measles](#)
- [Public Health England: Measles: guidance, data and analysis](#)
- [TravelHealthPro. Measles in Europe](#)
- [TravelHealthPro. Measles Worldwide](#)
- [Measles in brief](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization Weekly Epidemiological Record. Measles vaccines: WHO position paper – April 2017, No 17, 2017, 92, 205–228 \[Accessed 20 December 2017\]](#)
2. Durkheim DN, Crowcroft NS, Strebel PM. Measles- the epidemiology of elimination. *Vaccine* 2014; 32: 6880-6883
3. [Public Health England. Measles. Chapter 21. Immunisation against Infectious Disease. 1 July 2013. \[Accessed 20 December 2017\]](#)