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Measles Worldwide

A reminder for travellers to be up to date with measles vaccine

Cases of measles continue to be reported worldwide, with recent outbreaks reported in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East [1-3].

Measles epidemics in regions visited by UK travellers can directly contribute to an increase in measles cases in the UK [4].

Measles is a highly infectious illness spread by airborne/droplet transmission. Symptoms include fever, runny nose, conjunctivitis and cough. A rash then usually develops, starting at the head, then spreading to the trunk and limbs, over three to four days. Individuals can infect others from the beginning of their first symptoms to four days after the rash appears and the incubation period (the time between being infected and showing the first symptoms) is about ten days. Serious complications can occur. Risk of death from measles is age-related: high in children under one year of age, lower in children aged one to nine years, rising again in teenagers and adults [5].

In the UK, the death rate is approximately one in 5,000 cases [6].

Advice for travellers

As part of your travel preparation, make sure you are up-to-date with all currently recommended UK vaccines including [measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\)](#) vaccine. Two doses of MMR are needed for a person to be considered fully protected. MMR can be given from six months of age before travel to a risk country and/or where an outbreak is occurring.

If you have not had measles (the illness) or if you have not had two doses of MMR vaccine you may be at risk. This is especially a concern for travellers staying with friends or family, mixing with the local population or going to mass gatherings like festivals, sports events or pilgrimages. It is never too late to have the vaccine.

You may wish to consider carrying a record documenting vaccination against MMR when travelling.

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](#)
- [NHS Choices: Measles](#)
- [Public Health England: Measles - guidance, data and analysis](#)

- [Measles in brief](#)
- [Oxford Vaccine Group: Measles](#)

References

1. [Pan American Health Organization. Epidemiological Update Measles. 6 February 2018. 6 February 2018. \[Accessed 22 February 2018\]](#)
2. [World Health Organization. Global Measles and Rubella Update February 2018. \[Accessed 22 February 2018\]](#)
3. [World Health Organization. Europe observes a 4-fold increase in measles cases in 2017 compared to previous year. 19 February 2018. \[Accessed 22 February 2018\]](#)
4. [Public Health England. Research and analysis. Health Protection Report 11: 42. Measles outbreaks linked to importations from Europe. 24 November 2017, updated 15 December 2017. \[Accessed 22 February 2018\]](#)
5. [Public Health England. Measles. Chapter 21. Immunisation against Infectious Disease. 1 July 2013. \[Accessed 22 February 2018\]](#)
6. Miller CL (1985) Deaths from measles in England and Wales, 1970-83. *BMJ (Clin Res Ed)* 290(6466): 443-4. [Accessed 22 February 2018]