

07 May 2020

## **Measles reminder during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**

### **All travellers are advised to be up to date with measles vaccination**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) currently advises United Kingdom (UK) residents against all but essential international travel [1].

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 and caring for those infected is currently a public health priority in the UK and most other countries. However, it is very important to maintain good immunisation coverage to avoid outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases that could increase the burden on UK health services [2] and overseas; if UK travellers become ill abroad.

UK residents who must travel abroad should ensure they are fully protected against measles, either through a known history of past infection or with a record of two doses of a measles containing vaccine.

Measles remains widespread (endemic) in many countries/regions worldwide, including Europe. Routine immunisation programmes may be affected as priorities for health services globally have been in the control and management of COVID-19. Large measles outbreaks continue to be reported and summaries of measles cases and population incidence can be found here:

- [European Centres for Disease Control and Prevention- Monthly measles and rubella report](#)
- [World Health Organization – measles and rubella surveillance data](#)

### **Advice for travellers**

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes leads to serious complications. [Mumps Measles Rubella \(MMR\) vaccine](#) is available to all adults and children who are not up to date with their two doses [3]. Anyone who is not sure if they are protected should check with their GP practice. Before you travel, make sure you are up to date with all currently recommended UK vaccines.

In the UK, the first 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 circumstances; such as travel to a country where measles is common or during an outbreak, MMR can be given to babies from six months of age. 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 [4].

### **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](#). All suspected measles cases should be reported to

the [local Health Protection Team](#).

## Resources

- [Measles in brief](#)
- [Measles vaccination: infants from six months to under 12 months of age travelling overseas](#)
- [Public Health England: Measles: guidance, data and analysis](#)
- [Public Health England: MMR for all, general leaflet](#)

## References

1. [Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Foreign Travel Advice. Current 7 May 2020. \[Accessed 7 May 2020\]](#)
2. [Public Health England. Keep calm and carry on vaccinating. Vaccine update: issue 306. March 2020. \[Accessed 7 May 2020\]](#)
3. [National Health Service. Who should have the MMR vaccine? 8 April 2020 \[Accessed 7 May 2020\]](#)
4. [Public Health England. Measles. Chapter 21, Immunisation against Infectious Disease. Last updated 31 December 2019. \[Accessed 7 May 2020\]](#)