

Letter for Parents / Guardians

Dear Parent / Guardian

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has reported an increase in measles across the country and is encouraging people to check that they and their children have had two doses of the MMR vaccine. The free MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella.

Measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated, especially in nurseries and schools. It can be a very unpleasant illness and, in some children, it can be serious and lead to hospitalisation and complications such as pneumonia, meningitis, blindness or seizures (fits). In rare cases it can cause death.

Children aged between 12 months and 11 years old who have not received 2 doses of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR) are being offered vaccination by their GP as part of a national catch-up programme. Wirral's School Aged Immunisation Service will continue to support any missed vaccinations for children in Year 7 and above. **Please check your child's Red Book to see if they have received MMR vaccinations as scheduled or check with your GP surgery if you're unsure.**

Most healthy adults will have developed some immunity to measles but can still receive two doses of the vaccine from their GP too.

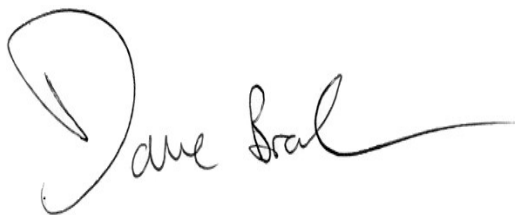
Measles symptoms to be aware of include:

- high fever
- sore, red, watery eyes
- coughing
- 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.

For more information about measles, see the [nhs.uk website](https://www.nhs.uk).

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Bradburn', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Dave Bradburn

Director of Public Health

Wirral

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/