

Holidaymakers urged to put MMR checks top of any travel plans

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes leads to serious complications. The disease is still endemic in many countries around the world including Europe, with France, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Germany among the countries reporting the highest case counts according to the [European Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(ECDC\)](#).

[PHE data published at the end of May](#) showed that measles remains a threat to the UK population, with 231 cases confirmed in England in the first quarter of 2019. The number of cases confirmed in England has been rising since 2018, with many linked to importations from Europe. Young people and adults aged 15 and over who missed out on the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine when they were young and some under-vaccinated communities have been particularly affected.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England, said:

Measles can kill and is incredibly easy to catch, especially if you're not vaccinated and travelling to affected countries. If you're in any doubt about your – or your child's – vaccination status, ask your GP or check your child's Red Book. Before you travel you should ensure you and your family are up to date with all currently recommended UK vaccines and MMR is especially important if you're planning to travel throughout the summer due to the ongoing outbreaks happening across Europe. It's never too late to get protected.

Nikki White, ABTA's Director of Destinations and Sustainability said:

Travellers might not typically think to check vaccination requirements for travel to Europe, but we encourage everyone to check their health records and catch-up on any missed vaccinations wherever they are travelling to. No matter where people are going on holiday, we always encourage them to check the Foreign Office's travel advice at the time of booking and before they are due to travel to make sure they are aware of the latest information about the destination and any health requirements.

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 (for example, 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.

1. The latest [UK quarterly data and commentary](#) on coverage achieved by the UK childhood immunisation programme is available online.
2. Travel health information can be found on the [TravelHealthPro website](#).

Measles signs and symptoms

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications. It's now uncommon in the UK because of the effective MMR vaccination programme. Although usually a mild illness in children, measles can be more severe in adults.

The initial symptoms of measles develop around 10 days after a person is infected. These can include:

- cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, sneezing, and a cough
- sore, red eyes that may be sensitive to light
- a high temperature (fever), which may reach around 40°C (104°F)
- a few days later, a red-brown blotchy rash will appear. This usually starts on the head or upper neck, before spreading outwards to the rest of the body

Symptoms usually resolve in about 7 to 10 days.