

MMR vaccination call following high numbers of cases

Latest update

In England, 301 new measles infections were confirmed in the period between April and June 2019 compared to 231 in the first quarter of 2019. Cases were reported in all regions except the North East. Most cases (266) were in unvaccinated individuals aged 15 years and over.

Continuing the increase seen between January and March, 2,028 cases of mumps were also confirmed in the second quarter of 2019, compared to 795 last quarter. The increase in mumps has been mostly driven by outbreaks in university students. Cases were reported across England, predominantly in young adults aged 15 to 34 years.

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

Although it is normal to see mumps outbreaks in universities every few years, we are seeing a significant number of cases, the highest quarterly figure since 2009.

Coupled with the continued measles outbreaks these figures clearly demonstrate the need for sustained high vaccination rates.

We're urging parents and their children, no matter how old they are, to check they've had 2 doses of MMR. Measles is easy to catch and can kill. Vaccines are there to stop the spread of disease and save lives.

It's never too late to protect yourself and others.

Nearly half of the mumps cases this quarter were unvaccinated. While the mumps component of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine is highly effective at protecting young children, immunity can reduce over time. Therefore, older teenagers and adults who received two doses of MMR in childhood can still get mumps although this is generally mild compared to those who are unvaccinated.

One new case of rubella re-infection in a pregnant woman was also reported.

Previous update

24 May 2019

PHE is calling for all parents to get their children vaccinated against MMR when the vaccine is offered, or for them to take it up now if they didn't

have it at the scheduled time.

In the first quarter of 2019, there were 231 confirmed cases of measles. This figure is slightly lower compared to the same quarter last year. As measles is highly infectious, anyone who has not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine is at risk, particularly unvaccinated people travelling to countries where there are currently large outbreaks of measles.

The recent measles cases are primarily occurring in under-vaccinated communities, particularly those with links to other countries with ongoing measles outbreaks. There has also been some spread into the wider population, such as those who may have missed out on the MMR vaccine when they were younger.

In the final quarter of 2018, 94.9% of eligible children aged 5 received the first dose of MMR. To achieve herd immunity for measles, at least 90 to 95% of the population need to be fully protected.

One dose of the MMR vaccine is about 90 to 95% effective at preventing measles. After a second dose, the level of protection is around 99%.

Coverage of the second dose is at 87.4% for children aged 5, for this reason PHE is urging those who have only had one dose to ensure they are fully vaccinated with 2 doses.

This quarter, 795 cases of mumps have also been confirmed. No new cases of rubella were reported.

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

Measles can kill and it is incredibly easy to catch, especially if you are not vaccinated. Even one child missing their vaccine is one too many – if you are in any doubt about your child's vaccination status, ask your GP as it's never too late to get protected.

There are measles outbreaks happening across Europe so if you are planning to travel, make sure you check with your GP and catch-up if needed.

We continue to work with NHS England on how we can make it as easy as possible for parents to access vaccines so that they can offer their children the best possible start in life.

Seema Kennedy, Public Health Minister said:

Over 30 years ago we introduced the MMR vaccine, and since then our world-leading vaccination programme is estimated to have prevented 1.8 million painful and potentially fatal cases of mumps. The vaccine was an enormous catapult for improving the health of children and young people and still is.

No child or young person should have to suffer from mumps, measles or rubella, and we must curb this recent increase in cases so we don't see a return of horrible diseases of the past. By taking up the MMR vaccine parents and young people can prevent more cases and I would urge everybody to do so.

The MMR vaccine is given on the NHS as a single injection to babies, as part of their routine vaccination schedule, usually within a month of their first birthday. A second injection of the vaccine is given just before starting school, usually at 3 years and 4 months.

The vaccine is also available to all adults and children who are not up to date with their 2 doses. Anyone who is not sure if they are fully vaccinated should check with their GP and those planning to travel to Europe should check [NaTHNaC travel health advice](#).

Background

The latest UK [quarterly data and commentary](#) on coverage achieved by the UK childhood immunisation programme is available.

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 40C (104F)
- 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.

Mumps signs and symptoms

Cases of mumps have increased significantly this quarter with outbreaks reported in some universities. However, numbers remain well below those seen in the past. Mumps cases tend to increase every 3 years in environments with close mixing such as festivals and universities. Although unvaccinated teenagers are at highest risk, mild cases can occur in those who are fully vaccinated.

The initial symptoms develop 14 to 21 days after a person is infected. These can include:

- fever, shivers, tiredness and painful swelling of the parotid glands. One side may be swollen initially but usually, both glands are eventually affected
- difficulty opening the mouth to talk, eat and drink
- children may complain of earache, difficulty eating and drinking, and, sometimes, abdominal pain

In as many as 30% of cases, symptoms are so minimal that the infection goes unnoticed. However, it can rarely cause unpleasant and painful complications, especially in older children.

Rubella

No new cases of rubella were reported this quarter.