



Measles and MMR Vaccination Programme



Briefing document for Head Teachers, School Staff, Childcare Settings, Colleges and Universities

Cases of measles are rising across the UK. It is a respiratory infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious life changing consequences for some.

This briefing document is for schools, childcare settings, universities and colleges on measles and the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccination in Wales. Please ensure that all staff have access to this information.

Measles facts

- 1 Measles is a highly infectious illness. It is contagious before symptoms start.
- 2 For every 100 people not vaccinated against measles, about 90 will catch measles if exposed to the measles virus.
- 3 It can cause serious illness including chest infections, seizures (fits), swelling of the brain, and brain damage. Serious complications can even occur many years after infection.
- 4 Measles can kill.
- 5 There is no cure for measles.
- 6 Children, young people and staff members are at risk of measles infection if they haven't had 2 doses of the MMR vaccination or documented natural infection.

Eligibility for MMR vaccination

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are offered **free to all children** before they start school at:

- 12-13 months, and
- 3 years and 4 months.

Children and adults who miss any of the doses can still receive them from their GP surgery at any time after they were due, with a month needed between the two doses.

The MMR vaccine should not be given to people who have a lowered immune system or who are pregnant. This is even more reason to ensure that everyone who is eligible has received both MMR doses, to protect those who cannot have the MMR vaccine.

If you are not sure if you have had both doses, it is safer to have too many doses of the vaccine than not enough.

More information about the MMR vaccine and eligibility is available at phw.nhs.wales/MMRvaccine

Measles symptoms



Rash



Temperature
(usually over 38.5°C)



Runny nose



Red, sore,
watery eyes



Cough

Measles usually starts with cold like symptoms. It can then be followed by a rash a few days later but not always. Sometimes people get small white spots on the insides of the cheeks and insides of lips that last a few days.

It is unlikely to be measles if you have had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine or had measles before, unless you have a condition or are on treatment which weakens the immune system.

For more information about measles symptoms, visit [NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Measles](#)

What to do if you suspect measles

If you suspect you, or a child/young person has measles you can get advice from NHS 111 or you can make an urgent GP appointment.

The person with suspected measles should not go to any health setting (e.g., GP, hospital, or pharmacy) without ringing ahead first and advising of any symptoms which might suggest measles.

If a doctor suspects measles, the individual should stay off nursery, school, college or work etc. for at least 4 days after the onset of rash (Note: date the rash started is day 0). They should also avoid being in contact with anybody who is:

- Not fully vaccinated for MMR (particularly children under the age of 4).
- Pregnant.
- Immunosuppressed (has a weakened immune system) due to a health condition or treatment.



What are the risks of being unvaccinated against measles?

As measles is a highly infectious disease it spreads quickly between people who are not vaccinated.

Uptake of the MMR vaccine decreased in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic which means we are now seeing an increase in cases of measles across the UK and in Wales.

Although not everybody with measles needs to be admitted to hospital, it is a very unpleasant illness even in its mildest form. There is no cure, and some people will be left with life changing brain damage. Serious, untreatable complications of measles can happen years after people have had the illness.

Staff or children/young people who are unvaccinated and who have been in contact with a confirmed measles case will be advised to stay at home for the duration of the incubation period. The incubation period is the time frame it takes for a disease to develop after coming into contact with it. For measles it is up to **21 days (3 weeks) after last exposure to someone with measles.**

About the MMR vaccine

The MMR vaccine is a safe and highly effective combined vaccine that protects against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles). It contains weakened versions of live measles, mumps and rubella viruses. It is given as an injection into the muscle of the upper arm in older children and adults. It is sometimes given in the thigh muscle but mainly to young children.

Before vaccination against measles existed, it was a very common disease and most people had it. Although many people made a full recovery after having measles, many were left with serious disabilities and some children died.

According to the World Health Organization around 128, 000 people died from measles around the world in 2021. Most of them were young children under 5.

All vaccines go through rigorous testing to ensure they are effective and safe. The two vaccines licensed for use in the UK to protect against measles are: Priorix and M-M-RVaxPRO.

No vaccines used by the NHS contain Thiomersal. The vaccine viruses are not grown in egg – people with severe egg allergies can safely receive the MMR vaccine. M-M-RVaxPRO contains highly purified gelatine derived from pigs. More information about this is available here phw.nhs.wales/porcinegelatine. People who would prefer to have a gelatine free MMR vaccine can ask to have Priorix.

A full list of the vaccine ingredients and possible side effects are available at medicines.org.uk/emc by entering Priorix or M-M-RVaxPro into the search box.

Sometimes the doses of MMR are given earlier than the routine appointments of 12-13 months or 3 years 4 months. This may be because a child was born in a different country or because it has been recommended by a healthcare professional in the UK who is dealing with an outbreak. If a first dose of MMR is given before 12 months of age it will need to be repeated. If a second dose of MMR is given before 15 months of age it will need to be repeated after 18 months. If the child is given the second dose from 15 months of age, no further doses are required.



It is safe to receive more than 2 doses of MMR vaccine when this is needed.

How can you help?

Please check you are **up to date** with your MMR vaccinations.

Please **speak positively** about the MMR vaccination programme with colleagues/parents/guardians and young people – the NHS wants to keep the population safe and well.

The NHS **recommends** MMR vaccination.

In the event of a case of measles in your setting, an outbreak or a need to undertake a vaccination session in your setting, please **engage and work with** the health care professionals involved when needed.