



## Proactive statement

6 October 2017

### **MMR vaccination call following increase in confirmed measles cases in Gloucestershire**

Public Health England (PHE) is asking parents to check that they and their children have received two doses of Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine and to be aware of the signs and symptoms of measles, following notification of 8 confirmed, 12 probable and 5 possible cases of measles in children and young adults in the Gloucestershire area.

Parents are also being asked to remain vigilant for signs and symptoms of measles and keep themselves or children away from nursery, school or work if they display symptoms. You should stay off work or school for four days after the typical measles rash has developed.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications.

Most people recover from measles after around 7 -10 days but sometimes it can lead to serious complications and it is estimated that around 1 in every 5,000 people with measles will die as a result of the infection

It is 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.

**Dr Toyin Ejidokun, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control for Public Health England South West, said:**

“While measles is now relatively uncommon in England thanks to the MMR vaccine, those who are unvaccinated, or not fully vaccinated, remain susceptible to the disease.

“The cases we have seen recently have affected young children. It is important to be aware that it is never too late to have the vaccine, so if you've not received two

doses of the vaccine in the past – or you're unsure – speak to your GP. There's no harm in receiving an additional dose where there is any uncertainty.

“The MMR vaccine is safe and effective vaccine and claims suggesting a link between the vaccine and autism have long-been thoroughly discredited.

“We are asking the community to remain alert to the symptoms of measles, which can include cold-like symptoms, sore red eyes, a high temperature or a red-brown blotchy rash.

“If you experience these symptoms seek medical attention, but be sure to phone ahead before you visit your GP surgery so arrangements can be made to prevent others from being infected.

“You should also see your GP if you've been in close contact with someone who has measles and you've not been fully vaccinated (had two doses of the MMR vaccine) or haven't had the infection before – particularly those who are immunosuppressed, pregnant or infants.

The MMR vaccination is routinely provided as part of the NHS Childhood Immunisation Programme in England. Uptake is high with more than 90% of children receiving 1 dose of the vaccine by 2 years of age since 2012.

**Dr Ardiana Gjini, Consultant Screening and Immunisation Lead for PHE and NHS England in the South West, said:**

“The best and safest way to protect our children from measles is by vaccinating them with two doses of the MMR vaccine, available for free on the NHS.

“During 2016/17 across Gloucestershire, more than 90% of children under two years old had received their first dose of the vaccine. However, even though over 5400 children across Gloucestershire have had their two doses of the vaccine by the time they turned 5, around 850 of the eligible under-fives have not. This leaves children and young people vulnerable to this serious illness as well as creating the potential for the virus to circulate in the community with the risk of small clusters or outbreaks occurring.

“Therefore I urge all parents and carers to please if in doubt ring your GP practice today to check and ensure that your children have had their full immunisation against Measles, as well as Mumps and German Measles (Rubella) with two doses of the MMR vaccine.”

An MMR catch-up immunisation campaign was launched in 2013, targeting unimmunised and partially immunised adolescents aged 10 to 16 years. As a result of this campaign only 90 cases were confirmed in 2014, and 59 cases in 2015. 2016

has seen a marked increase with 318 confirmed cases of measles reported in England during 2016.<sup>1</sup>

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### **Measles signs and symptoms**

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.

For further information about measles, please visit

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Information about the MMR vaccine can be found by visiting

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/mmr-vaccine.aspx>

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### **Notes to Editors**

1. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-confirmed-cases/measles-notifications-and-confirmed-cases-by-quarter-in-england-2013-to-2015>

agency of the Department of Health. Website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe). Twitter: @PHE\_uk, Facebook: [www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland](http://www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland).

2. For further information about measles, please visit <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
3. What are the symptoms of measles?
  - Symptoms typically develop 9–14 days (usually 10 days) after becoming infected.
  - Initial symptoms include cold-like symptoms, e.g. runny nose, cough, red eyes, aches and pains, tiredness, irritability and high fever, which may peak at 40°C / 104°F.
  - Tiny greyish-white spots (called Koplik's spots) may appear in the mouth and throat.
  - Initial symptoms are followed by a red-brown spotty rash, which develops a few days later.
  - The rash usually starts behind the ears and spreads over the face, neck and body.
  - Spots are initially small but quickly get bigger and often join together.
4. How soon should a child be back at school after measles?
  - Measles is most infectious from 4 days before the appearance of the rash until 4 days after.
  - Children should be kept off school for 5 days after the onset of the rash.

5. Measles prevalence rates in the Gloucestershire area, compared to the South West and England averages:

		Number of Confirmed Measles Cases				Rate per 100,000 Population			
		Glouc	South West (North)	South West	England	Glouc	South West (North)	South West	England
2013	Jan-Mar	46	47	53	714	7.60	1.96	0.99	1.33
	Apr-Jun	17	55	57	677	2.81	2.30	1.06	1.26
	Jul-Sep	3	27	42	127	0.50	1.13	0.78	0.24
	Oct-Dec	0	3	6	23	0.00	0.13	0.11	0.04
2014	Jan-Mar	0	2	3	78	0.00	0.08	0.06	0.14
	Apr-Jun	0	0	0	26	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05
	Jul-Sep	0	0	0	13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02
	Oct-Dec	0	0	0	4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
2015	Jan-Mar	0	0	0	21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
	Apr-Jun	0	1	11	34	0.00	0.04	0.20	0.06
	Jul-Sep	1	2	2	20	0.16	0.08	0.04	0.04
	Oct-Dec	0	0	0	24	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
2016	Jan-Mar	0	0	6	62	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.11
	Apr-Jun	0	2	20	188	0.00	0.08	0.36	0.34
	Jul-Sep	6	18	75	259	0.96	0.73	1.36	0.47
	Oct-Dec	0	0	1	37	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.07
2017	Jan-Mar	0	0	0	20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
	Apr-Jun	0	4	7	68	0.00	0.16	0.13	0.12
	Jul-Sep QTD	3	3	4	29	0.48	0.12	0.07	0.05

6. Vaccination rates for Gloucestershire compared to South west and England averages for 2015-16:

	2015/16			2016/17		
	Glos	South West	England	Glos	South West	England
MMR 1 dose @ 2 Yrs of age	90.2%	92.9%	91.9%	91.1%	93.1%	91.1%
MMR 1 dose @ 5 yrs of age	94.9%	96%	94.8%	95%	96.1%	95%
MMR 1+2 dose @ 5yrs of age	87.4%	90.6%	88.2%	87%	96%	87%

Source: NHS Digital, NHS Immunisation Statistics, England - 2015-17 (published)