

09 Nov 2023

Global risk of measles: travel reminder

All travellers are advised to be up to date with measles vaccination

Since the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom (UK) there has been a significant drop in the number of children vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and other childhood diseases [1-3]. In some countries, routine immunisation programmes, including MMR vaccination may have been affected, as priorities for health services globally were diverted to the control and management of COVID-19 [4,5].

This has left many people, particularly children susceptible to measles, a potentially fatal infection. The World Health Organization has called for countries to target all those who have missed routine immunisations including measles vaccines and to offer catch up doses [5].

UK residents planning to travel abroad should make sure they are fully protected against measles, either through a known history of past infection or with a record of two doses of a measles containing vaccine.

Measles occurs in many countries worldwide. Large measles outbreaks continue to be reported globally; summaries of measles cases and rates of infection can be found here:

- [European Centres for Disease Control and Prevention- Monthly measles reports](#)
- [World Health Organization: Provisional monthly measles and rubella data](#)

Measles outbreaks are not usually reported in the [Outbreak Surveillance](#) section of TravelHealthPro.

Advice for travellers

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes leads to serious complications. [Measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\) vaccine](#) is available to all adults and children who are not up to date with their two doses [6]. If you are not sure if you are protected, check with your GP practice or arrange a travel clinic appointment to discuss MMR.

Before you travel, make sure you are up to date with all currently recommended UK vaccines. You should also check for any current country recommendations relating to measles vaccination that may be in place. See our [general advice for travellers](#) for further details.

In the UK, the first 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 circumstances, such as travel to a country where measles is common or during an outbreak, MMR can be given to babies from six months of age [7]. Ask your health professional for advice on the best option for your child before you travel.

Two doses of MMR in a lifetime are needed for a person to be considered fully protected [7].

Advice for health professionals

Guidance on measles vaccination is available in [Immunisation against infectious disease](#). Advice on

immunisation against measles is also available for those whose [immunisation status is uncertain](#).

In the UK, measles is a [notifiable disease](#). All suspected measles cases should be reported to the [local Health Protection Team](#).

Resources

- [Measles in brief](#)
- [NHS: Measles – Protect yourselves, protect others](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: Measles: guidance, data and analysis](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: MMR for all, general leaflet](#)
- [UK Health Security Agency: What do I need to know about the MMR vaccine?](#)

References

1. [UK Health Security Agency. Those who have missed their MMR vaccination. Vaccine update: issue 329, May 2022. \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)
2. [UK Health Security Agency. Official Statistics. Cover of vaccination evaluated rapidly \(COVER\) programme 2022 to 2023: quarterly data. Last updated 26 September 2023. \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)
3. [UK Health Security Agency. Laboratory confirmed cases of measles, rubella and mumps in England: January to March 2023. 1 August 2023 \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)
4. [World Health Organization. News Item. UNICEF and WHO warn of perfect storm of conditions for measles outbreaks, affecting children. 2022; 27 April. \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)
5. [World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Immediate and targeted catch up vaccination needed to avert measles resurgence. 10 February 2023. \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)
6. [National Health Service. MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine. Last reviewed 8 April 2020. \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)
7. [UK Health Security Agency \(formerly Public Health England\). Measles. Chapter 21, Immunisation against Infectious Disease. Last updated 31 December 2019. \[Accessed 9 November 2023\]](#)