

30 May 2024

Important reminder about routine United Kingdom (UK) vaccines

Before you travel check all your routine immunisations are up to date

Vaccination is one of the best ways to protect against some diseases, like diphtheria, measles and polio. When healthcare systems are disrupted and vaccine coverage declines these diseases often return. The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that, following a fall during the COVID-19 pandemic, childhood vaccination rates are improving, but remain below ideal in many countries [1].

Diphtheria, rubella and polio are now uncommon in the UK, thanks to the success of the routine UK vaccination programme; but they are still reported in parts of the world where vaccines are in short supply or unavailable. International travellers who are not up to date with their vaccinations are at risk of catching these serious infections. Before travelling abroad, check you and your family are up to date with all [routine vaccines](#) recommended in the UK [2].

The UK and many European countries have reported increasing rates of [pertussis \(whooping cough\)](#) and [measles](#), mainly because of falling vaccination rates [3-6]. Vaccination against pertussis and measles is offered as part of the UK routine vaccination schedule [2]. The UK Health Security Agency encourage everyone to check they are up to date with routine vaccines appropriate for their age and circumstances [7].

Summaries of the numbers of vaccine preventable diseases reported worldwide are available here: [WHO Global Health Observatory data repository: Vaccine-preventable communicable diseases](#).

Outbreaks that are prevented by vaccines in the UK, like diphtheria, measles and meningococcal disease, are not usually reported on the [Outbreak Surveillance](#) section of TravelHealthPro.

Advice for travellers

Check you and your family are up to date with your [routine vaccine courses and boosters](#) before you travel. Pregnant women from 16 weeks gestation are reminded to ensure they have a booster of pertussis vaccine. If you are not sure about routine UK vaccines, check with your GP practice or a travel clinic.

In the UK routine courses of vaccines are available free of charge.

See our [general advice for travellers](#) for more information about preparing to travel abroad.

Advice for health professionals

Guidance on routine UK vaccines, including information about booster doses, is available in [Immunisation against infectious disease \(the 'Green Book'\)](#).

This includes advice for those people whose [immunisation status is uncertain](#).

In the UK all [notifiable diseases](#) must be reported to your [local Health Protection Team](#).

Resources

- [NHS vaccinations and when to have them](#)

References

1. [World Health Organization. Immunisation coverage. 18 July 2023 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)
2. [UK Health Security Agency. UK immunisation schedule: the green book, chapter 11. Last updated 17 March 2022 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)
3. [Smout E, Mellon D and Rae M. Whooping cough rises sharply in UK and Europe. BMJ. 2024; 385 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)
4. [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Increase of pertussis cases in the EU/EEA. 8 May 2024 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)
5. [European Commission. Increasing measles cases call for coordinated public health response. 16 February 2024 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)
6. [UK Health Security Agency. Latest measles statistics published. Last updated 2 May 2024 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)
7. [UK Health Security Agency. Marketing campaign launches to drive up childhood vaccinations. 29 February 2024 \[Accessed 30 May 2024\]](#)