

February 2024

Dear Parent or Carer,

**We are writing to encourage you to protect yourself and your children from measles by getting the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine.**

You may have seen news stories about the increase in measles cases across the UK recently. We often think of measles as an illness that no longer affects us in the UK. But because of several years of low vaccine uptake, measles is now on the rise again.

Measles is an infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious illness. One in five children who have measles need to be admitted to hospital. Complications of measles can include infection of the brain membrane, blindness, and seizures (fits). Measles can make both adults and children very unwell. People in certain at-risk groups including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with a weakened immune system, are at increased risk of complications from measles.

Early symptoms of measles include a cold-like symptoms such as coughing, sneezing and feeling hot. Then a rash develops; the rash starts on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body. The rash looks brown or red and can feel bumpy. Information about measles can be seen here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>

It is very important that people with suspected measles do not go to the GP or A&E as they are likely to infect others. If you are worried that you or your child has measles, stay at home, and ask for an urgent GP appointment explaining that you think it could be measles. You can also contact NHS111. Do not attend the GP surgery until you have called ahead. Avoid close contact with babies, pregnant women and anyone with a weakened immune system.

**The only protection against measles is the MMR vaccine. The MMR vaccine is a free, safe, and effective vaccine which protects you from catching and spreading measles. Having the two doses of MMR vaccine gives you the best protection.** There are two different types of MMR vaccine available in the UK. Some vaccines are made using pork gelatine in very small amounts. The Priorix MMR vaccine does not contain pork gelatine, this can be requested from the GP and is free. Information about the MMR vaccine can be found here [MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

**Children and adults can catch up on any missed vaccines. If you are not sure if you and your children have had the MMR vaccine, please check your online GP records, NHS app or red book. If you or your children have not had the MMR vaccine, please contact your GP to arrange this.**

**Thank you for your support in protecting Derbyshire residents from measles**

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EHoulston'.

Ellie Houlston, Director of Public Health for Derbyshire