



BARNLSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Think Measles in Schools

19th February 2024

About Measles

The United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has declared a national incident following Measles outbreaks in London and West Midlands. The best protection against measles for children and adults is to get both doses of the MMR vaccine.

Measles is a highly infectious, serious illness that can be very unpleasant and even cause death. Those most at risk are under 1's, the unvaccinated, immuno-compromised or pregnant woman. There is no specific treatment available, so it is important to get vaccinated to avoid serious illness.

In the UK, children are routinely offered the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccination when they reach 1 year old, and a follow-up dose at 3 years and 4 months. In recent years, the number of children vaccinated against measles has fallen. In Barnsley, over 90% of five year olds have had the two doses required for maximum protection. Whilst vaccination coverage is generally good, there are pockets of low uptake in certain communities in Barnsley.

Barnsley Council and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) are therefore calling on all parents and guardians to make sure their children are up to date with their 2 MMR doses. It's never too late to catch up, and you can get the MMR vaccine for free on the NHS whatever your age.

What are the symptoms of measles?

- Usually starts with cold-like symptoms
- High temperature
- Sore red watery eyes
- Cough and/or runny nose
- Small red spots with bluish-white centres inside the mouth
- A red/brown blotchy rash which appears several days later, rough to the touch, and harder to see on darker skin tones



What to do if a child at your school has measles or suspected measles

- If the child is physically in school, and you suspect they have measles, isolate them from any other children and vulnerable staff members (those who are unvaccinated, pregnant or immunocompromised) straight away. Contact the parents and ask them to collect the child and take them home, and phone their GP for advice. Parents should NOT take their child to the GP without phoning ahead first. Request the parents to update you if measles is confirmed or ruled out by a medical professional.
- If a child has measles confirmed by a medical professional, make sure the parent does not bring the child to school. The child should not mix with any other children or vulnerable adults (those who are unvaccinated, pregnant, or immunocompromised), or return to school, until **4 days after the onset of the rash**.
- It is considered fine for a child to be in school with a minor cough or common cold, provided they don't have a temperature. Refer to the following guidance, which explains when children should be kept away from school: [What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#).
- If two or more cases of measles are confirmed at your school, contact the UKHSA Health Protection Team on: on **0113 286 300 (or 0300 3030234 from 11th March)** for further advice. The team can also be contacted via email: yorkshirehumberhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk.

Advice to staff and other students if there are two or more positive cases in the school

UKHSA will be able to advise based on the specific situation. Children in the same class as a suspected or confirmed measles case should **not** automatically be sent home to isolate. Many of them will already be fully vaccinated, and not at risk of contracting measles. Head teachers may, however, wish to consider excluding unvaccinated pupils who have been exposed, because of the risk to other students.

Parents should be informed that, if their child has had both MMR doses, they will be protected against measles and there is no need to keep their child off school just

Contacts of cases at higher risk of developing measles (such as unvaccinated siblings, or unvaccinated staff members who have had contact of more than 15 minutes in the same room with the case), may be asked to self-exclude from school/nursery for the incubation period (21 days after contact with a case of measles). Vulnerable children and staff members (such as those who are pregnant), may also wish to self-isolate for 21 days. Those who've had two doses of the MMR vaccine do **not** need to isolate.

If you require further advice or support with communications, following an outbreak in your school, please UKHSA Health Protection Team on **0113 286 300 (or 0300 3030234 from 11th March)**. The team can also be contacted via email: yorkshirehumberhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk.

How you can prepare

You may wish to consider the following in the short-term:

- Send out the letter at the end of this document to all parents/guardians, explaining the symptoms of measles, encouraging them to check if their child is vaccinated, and what to do if their child gets measles.
- Print and display copies of [Measles: don't let your child catch it flyer \(for schools\) - Health Publications](#) (available in multiple languages [here](#)).
- Let staff know about the risks of measles, and encourage them to check their vaccination status and [get vaccinated with MMR](#) if they haven't had two doses already.
 - There is a section regarding staff immunisations available as part of this guidance: [Supporting immunisation programmes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Ensure your Business Continuity plans are up-to-date. You may wish to think about:
 - Where a child with measles could be isolated whilst they are waiting to be collected from school
 - Provisions for if unvaccinated or vulnerable staff members have to take time off to isolate. The guidance indicates that unvaccinated staff members who have been in contact with a confirmed measles case for 15 minutes or more will need to isolate for 21 days. Other staff members, such as those who are pregnant or immunocompromised, may also wish to isolate as a precaution. This could potentially mean a number of staff off from work at the same time.

Guidance and further support

If in doubt, report any suspected case to the Yorkshire and the Humber Health protection team by phoning: **0113 386 0300**.

Please note, the UKHSA Yorkshire & Humber Health Protection Team is changing their telephone number with effect from 11th March 2024. From this date, please call: 0300 3030234.

- [National measles guidelines January 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Managing specific infectious diseases: A to Z - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- NHS 111 / [Check your symptoms - NHS 111](#)
- [Measles: information for schools and healthcare centres - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

Thank you.



BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council

**Public Health Directorate
Business Unit: Public Health & Regulatory Services**

Anna Hartley

Executive Director Public Health &
Communities

Public Health & Communities Directorate

Barnsley Council



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Metropolitan Borough Council

**Public Health Directorate
Business Unit: Public Health & Regulatory Services**

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Date: Tuesday 6 February 2024

Dear parents and carers,

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has reported an increase in measles cases across the country, including in Yorkshire. To help protect our communities, we want to encourage you to check that your whole family has received two doses of the MMR vaccine.

This free vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella. Over 90% of five-year-olds in Barnsley have already received two doses of the MMR vaccine, but we want to encourage more to come forward.

Parents should make sure their children receive the MMR vaccination when it is offered to them at one year of age and as a pre-school booster at three years, four months of age.

If children and young adults have missed these vaccinations in the past, it's important to arrange a vaccination with your GP practice now, particularly in light of the recent cases.

The Barnsley School Age Immunisation Service (SAIS) are offering catch-up vaccinations (including MMR) for children and young people aged from three years and ten months up to the end of Year 11. This includes community outreach clinics and home visits.

You can contact the Barnsley SAIS team by:

Emailing barnsleysais@swyt.nhs.uk.
Calling 01226 644236.

Check your child's Red Book to see if they've received their MMR vaccinations as scheduled or check with your GP surgery if you're unsure.

Most healthy adults will have developed some immunity to measles but can still receive two doses of the vaccine from their GP too. You can check your vaccination status by checking your GP health record through the NHS App, online or by contacting your GP practice.



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Anyone with symptoms is also being advised to stay at home and phone their GP or NHS 111 for advice.

Measles symptoms you should be aware of include:

- a high temperature
- sore, red and watery eyes
- coughing
- aching and feeling generally unwell
- a blotchy red-brown rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms.

For more information about measles, please visit the NHS website on:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles

Yours sincerely,

Anna Hartley

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UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)