

11 September 2024

Slough parents reminded of the importance of getting their children vaccinated

With millions of children across the country going back to school over the last week, parents and carers are urged to check that their children are up to date with their immunisations, including both doses of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella), in the wake of rising measles cases across the country.

Childhood vaccination rates have fallen over the past 10 years and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is calling on parents to help reverse the downward trend of the past decade and have warned that unless action is taken and uptake improves, we are likely to see the diseases that these vaccines prevent against re-emerging ([GOV.UK, March 2024](#)).

It is estimated that more than 102,000 children aged four and five years old starting in reception are not protected against catching measles, mumps, and rubella. Measles is highly infectious and nine out of 10 unvaccinated children in a classroom will catch the disease if just one child is infectious ([NHSE, 2023](#)).

Childhood vaccinations give children the best protection and prevent more than 5,000 deaths and 100,000 hospital admissions each year in England. Whilst measles can be mild for some children, one in five will require a hospital visit and the infection can lead to complications in one in 15, such as meningitis and sepsis. There is no specific treatment for measles and vaccination gives the best protection from serious illness. Measles can start with cold like symptoms such as a runny nose, sneezing and a cough, with a rash not showing until they have been infectious for up to four days. In a classroom it may not be easy to spot that they have the measles infection at first and before they have a rash, they could have infected nine out of 10 of their unvaccinated classmates.

The MMR vaccine is given at one year old and again at three years and four months in readiness for starting school. Two doses are enough to give lifelong protection from becoming seriously unwell with measles, mumps, and rubella. The MMR vaccine is often given at the same time as

the pre-school booster including protection against polio and if parents / carers do not want their child to have the MMR vaccine that contains porcine gelatine, they can ask for the Priorix vaccine.

The UKHSA and the NHS launched a second wave of its national campaign to support efforts to increase uptake of childhood immunisations among children aged 0-5 and highlight the serious risk childhood diseases can pose if children aren't vaccinated. This is particularly important as children go back to school.

In line with this, Slough Borough Council Public Health Team advises that anyone who has missed any of their vaccinations can catch up at any time and parents / carers should check their child's red book or ask their GP practice to make sure their child is fully vaccinated. If any doses have been missed, an appointment can be made with the GP practice to catch up and become protected, alternatively if your child is school aged you can speak with the School Immunisation team, who are the NHS providers of all routine school immunisations, who can offer you a clinic appointment and/ or offer alongside other planned immunisations within a school setting (see below for contact details).

The World Health Organisation identifies measles as one the most contagious infections in the world, yet the disease is completely preventable with vaccination. The UK lost its eradication status for measles in 2018 following an increase in measles cases in the country and vaccine levels lower than the 95% target set. The most recent data for quarter four (January - March 2023/24) of Slough children at five years who had received these vaccinations are: MMR1 (91%), MMR2 (86.7%) and Preschool Booster (Td/IPV) (85%).

Cllr Ishrat Shah, cabinet member for equalities, public health, and public protection, said: "It's really important that residents look after their children's health by ensuring they are vaccinated against childhood diseases. Equally if you are an adult that hasn't completed your MMR vaccinations you can also contact your GP practice to get vaccinated. There are also options available if parents do not want their child to have the MMR vaccine that contains porcine gelatine, for example, they can ask for the Priorix vaccine. Looking after our own health and that of our families and the wider community is so important."

Useful immunisation information and resources:

Berkshire Immunisation Team (NHS commissioned provider of routine school-aged immunisations) - <https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/public-health-nursing-health-visiting-school-nursing-immunisation/immunisations/>
[Why vaccination is important and the safest way to protect yourself](#)
[MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine](#)
[4-in-1 pre-school booster vaccine](#)

[Berkshire Healthcare School Aged Immunisation Service](#) : For information on immunisations and details on how to refer to the service for missed immunisations.

[NHS England September 2023](#) NHS facts about measles

[Vaccine knowledge](#) : is a source of independent, evidence-based information about vaccines and infectious diseases, the webpages can be translated.

Contact details:

The Berkshire School Aged Immunisation Team can be contacted for advice and to book appointments, Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm (term time only) by telephone or email.

Telephone: [0300 365 0077](tel:03003650077)

Email:

For children and young people who live or attend a school in Bracknell, Slough or Windsor and Maidenhead: Eastschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk