



Health Protection Agency

West Midlands East  
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Dear Parent/Guardian

**Re: MMR and measles outbreaks**

This is to alert you that France is currently experiencing a large outbreak of measles with over 4000 cases confirmed this year. Outbreaks have also been reported in countries bordering France and in other parts of Europe. [http://www.euvac.net/graphics/euvac/pdf/2011\\_jan\\_feb.pdf](http://www.euvac.net/graphics/euvac/pdf/2011_jan_feb.pdf)

We are also observing an increase in the number of confirmed cases of measles in England, including the West Midlands. These appear to be occurring in unimmunised individuals, in particular older children attending secondary schools, in students attending colleges and universities and in adults. Many of these cases have links to cases in France and other parts of Europe.

Measles is a highly contagious illness and can have severe complications. Individuals with measles are usually quite ill and in some circumstances can develop pneumonia and encephalitis. We are therefore keen to prevent further cases from occurring.

**There is considerable risk that your child may catch measles if they are not protected against the disease. Unless your child has already received two doses of vaccine, we would advise you to obtain MMR vaccination before travelling to mainland Europe.**

Immunisation with MMR vaccine is the safest way to protect against measles. Not all individuals respond adequately to a single dose of vaccine, so to ensure greater protection, individuals need to receive two doses of MMR.

The MMR vaccine is usually given at 13 months as part of the routine childhood vaccination programme. A second dose is given between three years four months and five years. For individuals over the age of five years two doses of the MMR vaccine can be given one month apart to prevent infection. If your child has not had MMR vaccine at all, please arrange this through your GP immediately. If your school child has had only one dose of MMR vaccine, please arrange a second dose as soon as possible. The second dose should be given a month after the first one. School children, young people and adults who have not been fully immunised can be protected by receiving the MMR vaccine at any age.

Individuals or parents of children suspected to be suffering from a measles-like rash should telephone their GP for advice.

To help in minimising spread to others, we would advise that suspected cases are excluded from school/work for 5 days from onset of the rash.

Further information about measles and the MMR vaccine can be found at the HPA website: [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk) or at NHS Choices website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Measles](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Measles). Please contact your GP/Practice Nurse/ School nurses with this letter to arrange MMR vaccination for your child.

Yours faithfully



**Dr Huda Mohamed**  
**Consultant in Communicable Disease Control/ Unit Director**  
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